

THE TAI OF ASSAM
AND ANCIENT TAI RITUAL

Volume II

Sacrifices and Time-reckoning

by

H. J. TERWIEL

CENTRE FOR SOUTH EAST ASIAN STUDIES
GAYA - 823 001

THE TAI OF ASSAM
AND ANCIENT TAI RITUAL

Volume II

Sacrifices and Time-reckoning

by

B. J. TERWIEL

General Editor

SACHCHIDANAND SAHAI

CENTRE FOR SOUTH EAST ASIAN STUDIES
GAYA - 823 001

PUBLISHED BY THE SOUTH EAST ASIAN REVIEW OFFICE
RAMSAGAR ROAD, GAYA, BIHAR, INDIA
FOR THE CENTRE FOR SOUTH EAST ASIAN STUDIES
GAYA - 823 001

First Published 1981

© THE SOUTH EAST ASIAN REVIEW OFFICE
AND B. J. TERWIEL

PRINTED IN INDIA
AT THE CATHOLIC PRESS, RANCHI

CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER 1 — INTRODUCTION	1
Section 1. The likely origin and spread of the Tai peoples	1
Section 2. Research aims and methods	8
A Note on transliteration	13
PART A — SACRIFICES	17
CHAPTER 2 — BLOOD SACRIFICES AMONGST THE ASSAMESE TAI	19
Methodology	19
Sacrificial rituals of the Khamyang	25
a) The sacrifice for Phii Mueang, or Raaz Daew	25
b) The sacrifice for Phii Faa, or Sarok Daew	31
c) Sacrifices for Phii Huean, or Ghor Daew	34
Sacrificial rituals of the Phahey	34
a) The sacrifice for Phii Sua Mueang, or Sum Daew	34
b) The sacrifice for Phii Hung	35
Sacrificial rituals of the Khamti	36
a) Sacrifices for Phii Mueang	36
b) Other sacrifices	37
Overview	37
CHAPTER 3 — AHOM SACRIFICIAL RITUALS	39
The historical background	39
Methodology	47
Sacrificial rituals	48
a) The communal ritual called <i>uum phra</i>	48
b) Sacrifices for Phii Mac Thao	54
c) Sacrifices for Aai Mae Nang or <i>batawi puja</i> , and <i>subachani</i>	56
d) Yaa Sing Phra, Lueng Don and fowls' bone oracles	57
e) A sacrifice for Lai Lung Kham	59
f) Sacrifices for the ancestors	60
g) Other Ahom sacrifices	62
General remarks	63
CHAPTER 4 — SACRIFICIAL TRADITIONS AMONGST OTHER TAI GROUPS	65
The Shan	65
The Lue	66
The Nua	68
The Yuan	69
The Siamese	70

	PAGE
The Tai of southern Thailand	73
The Tai of northeast Thailand	73
The Laotians	74
The Tai Neua	79
The Black and the White Tai	80
The Red Tai	81
The Chuang	82
The Nhang	82
Analysis	83
a) The annual communal sacrifice	83
b) Human sacrifices	88
c) The range of victims	89
d) Divination techniques	90
e) Oaths of allegiance	91
CHAPTER 5 — SACRIFICES IN WIDER PERSPECTIVE	93
a) Assamese lowland peoples	93
b) Assamese hill peoples	95
c) The Kachin	98
d) The Chin	100
e) The Akha	101
f) The P'u Noi	101
g) The Karen, the Lawa, the Labu and the Khmu	102
h) The Hmong	103
i) The Chinese traditions	105
j) The Ch'iang	106
k) The Muang	107
l) Other Vietnamese minority groups	108
m) The Khmer	109
n) The Pear	110
Analysis	111
1) Human sacrifices	111
2) Animal sacrifices	112
3) The <i>tulaeo</i>	115
4) Divination techniques	117
PART B — TIME-RECKONING	121
CHAPTER 6 — ANCIENT ASPECTS OF TAI CALENDARS	123
The Ahom	123
The Khamyang, the Phakey and the Khamti	126
The Shan	129
The Lue	130
The Yuan	130
The Siamese	131
The Lao	134
The Tai Neua	135

	PAGE
The Black Tai and the White Tai	136
The Red Tai	137
The Diao	138
The Tho	138
Overview	138
a) The sexagenary cycle	138
b) The months	140
c) The sixty-day cycle	141
d) The ten-day and the five-day week	142
e) Divisions of the day	145
 CHAPTER 7 — THE ANCIENT TAI CALENDAR IN WIDER PERSPECTIVE	 147
Section 1. The sixty-year and the sixty-day cycles	147
a) The Indian system	147
b) The Tibetan cycle	148
c) Mon and early Burmese cycle	148
d) The Akha	149
e) The Khmu, the P'u Noi and the Lamet	149
f) The Chinese system	150
g) The Hmong system	152
h) The Muong	153
i) The Vietnamese	153
j) The Khmer cycle	154
Section 2. The lunar calendar	155
a) The Indian system	155
b) The Burmese system	155
c) Akha and P'u Noi months	156
d) The Chinese lunar months	157
e) The Muong and the Vietnamese systems	158
f) The Khmer lunar calendar	159
Section 3. Weeks, days, and subdivisions of days	160
a) The Indian system	160
b) The Burmese system	161
c) The Akha, Khmu, P'u Noi, Hmong and Lamet weeks	162
d) The Chinese week and subdivisions of the day	163
e) The Muong and Vietnamese diurnal divisions and weeks	164
f) The Khmer week	164
Summary	165
 CHAPTER 8 — CONCLUSIONS	 167
Aspects of Ancient Tai culture	169
Tai culture in its wider setting	175
 BIBLIOGRAPHY — REFERENCES CITED	 181
 INDEX	 189

LIST OF TABLES

<i>Tables</i>	PAGE
1 The Ahom sexagenary cycle	124
2 Ahom and Assamese months	125
3 Ahom traditional divisions of the day	126
4 The Phakey <i>lakni</i> system and marriage	127
5 The Assamese Tai and divisions of the day	128
6 The Shan decimal and duodecimal series	129
7 Shan divisions of the day	129
8 The Yuan decimal and duodecimal series	130
9 The Siamese duodecimal cycle	131
10 The decimal series in the Siamese sexagenary system	132
11 The Lao decimal and duodecimal series	134
12 The Laotian <i>nyams</i>	135
13 The Tai Neua divisions of the day	136
14 The Black Tai divisions of the day	136
15 The Red Tai divisions of the day	137
16 The decimal and duodecimal series amongst Tai peoples	139
17 The Tibetan series of ten and twelve names	148
18 Decimal and duodecimal names amongst Khmu, P'u Noi and Lamet	150
19 The "ten stems", "five agents" and "twelve branches"	151
20 The Hmong twelve-day week	152
21 The Vietnamese series of ten, the series of twelve and their associations	154
22 The Burmese months, their names in old and modern spelling	156
23 An Indian method of dividing the day	161
24 Burmese traditional divisions of the day: some examples	162

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure	Page
1 The Siamese " <i>ubakong</i> "	143
2 A diagram from northern Laos	144

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The fieldwork during which information on the sacrificial traditions of the Tai of Assam was collected was made possible through a financial grant from the Australian Research Grant Commission. During the three months spent in Assam I also had the great fortune to have been attached, in an honorary position, to Dibrugarh University, where I was given an office at the Department of Anthropology and where I had access to a substantial collection of books. Dibrugarh University also generously helped with the accommodation of myself and my family. The writing of this second volume took place in Germany during a period when I was accepted as recipient of a Von Humboldt Research Fellowship. During that time I was attached to the Department of Chinese Language and Culture of Hamburg University, section Burma, Thailand and Indochina. I thank all these organizations for their tangible support. Without them the work could not have proceeded so rapidly and efficiently.

This study is part of a multi-volume undertaking. The first volume was published at the Centre for South East Asian Studies, Gaya, with the assistance of a money grant from the Faculty of Asian Studies, The Australian National University. The printing of this second volume has also been possible due to a grant from this committee.

I also owe a great debt to many people who have assisted me in my efforts to obtain travel permits, who drove me to Tai informants and who aided me with alacrity during a period when there were many troubles in Assam and people could have been forgiven for impatiently shoving aside my plans to reconstruct aspects of Ancient Tai culture. Instead of doing so, most people were helpful and courteous. I will not publish here a list of those who have gone out of their way in providing assistance, for in the uncertain Assamese situation I might not do them a service by producing such a list.

My greatest debt is of course to all Tai informants who allowed me to discuss aspects of their past. This time the research concerned a somewhat sensitive issue for the Buddhists among my informants and here I beg their pardon for my prying into aspects of the past which some would like to have kept buried. As in the first period of research, the Venerable Jinavangsa travelled far and wide to assist me and I thank him and his family for their warm hospitality and friendship. A person who has played a key role during many of the research trips and who assisted with interpreting as well as with intelligent discussion was Shri H. N. Baruah, to whom I would like to express my sincere thanks.

Finally I am pleased to mention that my family also played a constructive role in the creation of this volume. My wife and my daughters adapted extremely well to circumstances which turned out more of a challenge than could have been expected.

INTRODUCTION

This book is the second volume of a study regarding the cultural heritage of some ethnic groups in Assam which can all be given the label Tai.¹ In the first volume considerable attention has been given to the vexed problems connected with the origin and the earliest history of the Tai peoples in general as well as to the much less controversial issue of the role of Tai peoples in the history of Assam. In order to make it possible that this book can be used in its own right, without continuous references to Volume I, the main points raised there will be summarily repeated in the first section of this introduction. Those who wish to read more on this subject, or who would like to take note of the many references to the literature on this topic, need perforce consult Volume I or look up an even more detailed account published elsewhere².

These books on the Tai of Assam represent an effort to gain insight into aspects of traditional Tai culture with the aid of a rather strictly applied scientific method, and the shape of the main chapters is determined by this method. It is necessary therefore also to give a short outline of the basic presuppositions, the research aims and techniques. The second section of the introduction is concerned with such matters.

First, however, the word "Tai" must be defined. In a twentieth century context the term poses little problems: the Tai are all peoples speaking Tai languages, such as the Shan, the Khamti, the Lue, the Yuan, the Thai or Siamese, the Lao, the Neua, the Black Tai, the White Tai, the Red Tai and the Chung Chia.³ However, when dealing with speculations about Tai groups during periods of time when there existed as yet no written records in Tai, the linguistic criterion is inadequate. In these volumes the term Tai is used, not only for all those peoples who are at present speaking Tai languages, but also for those who may be regarded as the ancestors of present-day Tai. It is a matter of judgement how far back in time such a label can be meaningfully applied. Scholars are by no means in agreement as to when Tai culture came into existence. In these volumes it is assumed that the formation of the earliest recognisable Tai culture occurred during the Han period.

SECTION I: THE LIKELY ORIGIN AND SPREAD OF THE TAI PEOPLES

There are many hypotheses regarding the whereabouts of what some scholars deem to be Tai peoples or their ancestors during the first and

¹ The term is defined below. In order to diminish the chance of creating a confusion between the words "Tai" and "Thai" the latter term will be accompanied by the words "of Thailand" or the time-honoured substitute "Siamese" will be used.

² B. J. Terwiel, "The Origin of the Tai Peoples Reconsidered", *Oriens Extremus*, Volume 25, Part 2, 1978, pp. 239-58.

³ For present-day Tai subdivisions, see F. M. Lebar (ed.), *Ethnic Groups of Mainland Southeast Asia*, New Haven: HRAF Press, 1964, p. 187 *et seq.*

second millennium B.C. and even further back in time. The most widespread and popular "theory" is one whereby the Tai peoples are believed to have entered Assam from Mongolia. However, they have been regarded as part of the sub-continent of South-East Asia. It was by the Tai peoples who came from Mongolia to South-East Asia probably starting from a migration of a statement by Teichgraber, which was printed in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society*.⁴ It is remarkable that he evaluated Tai of Assam also accept the belief that they are of Mongolian stock but in Assam this much is based mainly upon a few classification of facial features. To many Assamese there are in Assam many peoples who do not appear to belong to one of India races and hence are lumped together as 'Mongoloid'. It was especially in the early days of the known culture of the Mongoloid peoples to the A.I.J. - Assam all in this category. However, the observer who has taken a long-term view of the Southeast Asian the idea of a migration to the Assamese Tai do not necessarily indicate a link with peoples from northern Asia. Though there is evidence to a certain degree of mixture between Tai peoples and communities from southern China, most Tai speaking these of Assam are clearly genetically linked with Southeast Asian peoples. This is also borne out by anthropobiological studies.⁵

As yet no convincing evidence has been brought forward upon which a hypothesis of a Mongoloid background to the Tai peoples can be held. On the contrary, the rather scanty evidence regarding the early days of Tai culture which has been accepted by ethnologists and linguists such as comparative linguistics in which Tai were probably beginning in an early stage of the development of Tai culture communities in which the economic background of traditional Tai cultures are dominated by a richness of Tai culture, a way of life in Mongolia. For example, it is generally agreed that additional Tai culture communities with rice growing in particular areas of lowland Tai peoples, forest in the high valleys and the older form of Tai culture, the use of permanent and temporary techniques of irrigation was not used in the highland flood plains. If they were settled in a mountainous high valley, the relatively small villages of lowland where irrigation was not a matter of tapping and getting mountain streams to flow down to the level of the valley each surrounded by a small lake. The typically Tai culture is related to lowland marshes and rivers and to the coastal flood plains, always built upon rivers. Hence it is impossible to date a way of life in the mountainous Tai culture. An examination of the first burial of different types of rice in Southeast Asia is a remarkable coincidence. They were the Tai, who there was the culture of rice, is seen in a prominent place and the rice is the main food source in the area where the Tai peoples appear to have spread from the south of China and Southeast Asia and Assam and the rice has been the first in the lowland and coastal type of rice is worthy of further investigation. A people who are culturally

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 240.

Chapter I, and "The Origin of the Tai

⁵ See *The Tai of Assam, Volume I, Peoples Reconsidered*, pp. 343-4.

so intimately linked with rice-growing in permanent fields cannot meaningfully look for its roots in Mongolia but must trace its genesis in the relatively warm lowlands.

Scholars disagree as to exactly where the Tai language was formed. Some believe that the peoples who lived in China long in northern Thailand and Laos were the ancestors of the present-day middle and southern China, and yet other researchers insist strongly that the Tai developed their characteristic southern cultural values somewhere now known as Tongkin and coastal Kwang-Pai. As I am inclined to place myself among the latter group but admit that the study of Tai precursors remains rather sketchy, Hopetown scholars and sensitive linguists and geneticists will continue to seek evidence which will throw light upon this matter.

For the purpose of this book it does not really matter where the peoples giving rise to Tai culture lived during the first, second or even third millennium B.C. I intend, in my reading of the evidence, to assume that the cultural features which now are recognized as typically Tai and non-Tai were present in the past. It may well be found to speak against this hypothesis. This study deals with Tai culture as a phenomenon recognizable as such with a precision which I am conscious that it does not always warrant.

The most important reason for not going back to the Han period (1st century B.C. to 2nd century A.D.) for the period beginning around 200 B.C. and 200 A.D. (from 200 to 700 A.D. a period for which there are still relatively few sources) is the Tai label 'Archais Tai' applied. Between 200 A.D. and the end of the first millennium falls the Ancient Tai time which comes in for a lot of attention in this book. The Ancient Tai period is the time just before the Tai started writing their own history. These dates must not be regarded as generally accepted. They are simply possible guesses which evaluate the evidence collected. These guesses, it is quite likely that at some time in the future they will have been fitted or reformulated as more evidence is accumulated.

One of the aims of this book is to check the record of Ancient Tai culture to examine the Tai as a group of peoples before their spectacular spreading over most of mainland Southeast Asia. It is assumed here that around the end of the first millennium A.D. the Tai formed a relatively homogeneous group. A few later corroborating evidence was collected from other historical sources as a support, normally rested largely upon evidence brought forward by linguists. At present day Tai peoples have been judged to be quite closely related to each other. These Tai speakers who have mastered a relatively pure form of Tai have little difficulty understanding other traditional Tai languages. For example a Yunnan speaker can communicate with many Tai of southern China and a Shan soon feels at home in Laos. From local passages in African manuscripts it is quite clear to this researcher that even African Tai language which has been extinct for some time is very closely related to other Tai languages than the present dictionaries and grammars of such would suggest. The reason why African studies of languages call for so much from other Tai

may well be in the fact that the scholars dealing with African have generally approached that language from an "Indo-European framework" and have used a method of transcription based upon the standard transcription of Assamese. There is no doubt that linguists with a better knowledge of one or more of the other Tai languages will be able to convey Assamese to a greater extent than hitherto has been done.

It is thus assumed that at the close of the first millennium A.D. the Tai speakers formed a relatively cohesive culture with specific characteristics and they are believed to have been very mobile in an area where communication with each other was possible as contacts were numerous. The area in which they lived covered many of the present-day states of north-western Vietnam and large tracts of lowland and highland to the east of China, a region where some of the Tai can be seen today. The Tai were a vigorous and mobile people who through migration and conquest had long been moving in waves across the area of China. Already among the people here a good knowledge of the Assamese Tai they had experienced some difficulties regarding the expansion of the north. The Chinese recorded works written over some of the early centuries by the Tai and occasionally they have been preserved by the Chinese. There are accounts of Tai writings and repetitions and the repeated Chinese military intervention.

The Tai had to come to the conclusion that a further expansion was no longer feasible and indeed that the Chinese were gaining ground. This expansionist accounts at least in the researches conducted by the beginning of the Tai expansion over the land of Southeast Asia. Then the formidable mountain ranges which were the Himalayas and the Andes towards the foot of the Himalayas had effectively held the Tai back from expanding further into South Asia and the Indian subcontinent. The first millennium A.D. groups of Tai began to settle in the mountain ranges in South Asia and the valleys. The Tai's spread into the mountain ranges in South Asia appears to have been interrupted. In the early centuries of the first millennium A.D. the Tai had already reached all the regions where they can be found today.

It is often thought that the spread of the Tai was due to conquest and a slow process of taking over the region with Tai speakers rather than by conquest. In these books this is not the case. It is not the case. What it is true that in spectacular battles have been recorded and the cities were razed down. The Tai expansion was probably interrupted. The lack of records of warfare is here in evidence and reflects the lack of strong political power in the region which was a factor in the Tai's expansion. A Tai ruler accompanied by a large army of Tai soldiers would descend upon a city and request the local ruler to recognize him as overlord of the city. The ruler would then be

* G. Coedès, *The Indianized States of South-East Asia*, London, W. F. & A. Coedès, 1938, p. 189.

* B. M. Brown, "Early Political Institutions of the Tai in Southeast Asia," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 1968, pp. 18-21.

scanty evidence for any theory on this matter, the little there is appears to support Bramman's point of view. A careful reading of the available Tai historical legends indicates a journey of conquest rather than a peaceful spreading. The exploits of the Black Tai people apparently fit this pattern* as do those of the first Ahom nobles.[†] Moreover, as soon as the Tai appear in a region, they establish a dominant and often tyrannical step abruptly to make way for a Tai way of life. The extension of the comprehensive and gradual southern characteristics of a step-wise migrating people.

Another theme, one which is often stressed in the less scholarly books which mention the Tai expansion over mainland Southeast Asia, is that the sudden spread was the result of the Mongol conquest of China. Republic of China. Kuhn's studies concerning the Tai kingdom of Nanchang caused a mass exodus of Tai peoples who fled to Tai-land, east, south, and north, and in the process that the Tai peoples could not face the burden of Mongol overlordship and preferred to give tribute to the Chinese in their ancient kingdom of Siam, a place where, red freed or exiled still be found. Such a view is based upon such assumptions. The famous kingdom of Nanchang, which flourished from the eighth century until Kublai Khan's reign, was during the time of its glory has been wrongly assigned to the Tai. Although Nanchang's later days probably coincided with the Tai people's mass exodus, its vast population it is generally accepted amongst scholars that a large number of the Nanchang people were not Tai. When Kublai Khan visited Nanchang in 1286, he found a large number of Tai peoples took place, and the picture of a wave of Tai peoples fleeing in front of the army is a false and misleading one. The Tai peoples were already firmly entrenched in what is now northern Laos, southern Thailand, northern Burma, and they had already established a stronghold in the Brahmaputra valley some time before the Mongols took control of Yunnan in 1253.

Naturally, this does not deny the possibility that the later Yuan dynasty's attacks upon Vietnam and Burma must have had a profound effect upon the balance of power in mainland Southeast Asia. The temporary weakening of a major power in this region gave the Tai peoples a chance to strengthen their position in many of the valleys they had taken and venture into new regions. The new map of the world which was created by the temporary weakening of the Burmese and the Khmer was rapidly filled by Tai. Thus, in reality, the Mongols retarded and pressed Tai expansion, but it is incorrect to believe that the Tai were driven out of China into the region they inhabit at present by the actions of Kublai Khan.

From the evidence available toward the history of the Tai peoples is one of efforts to consolidate their power over the many valley regions they had required. The Tai have spread over a vast region which contained immense stretches of a tropical world was for them to be of any use to them and their wetland, mountainous, and forested. The pattern of topography of the region occupied by the Tai in mainland Southeast Asia is not

* H. Roux, "Quelques minorités ethniques du Nord-Indochine", *France-Asie*, January-February 1954, pp. 378-80.

Ahom Buranjis, Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1930, p. 25.

[†] "The Origin of the Tai Peoples Reconsidered", p. 240.

[†] G. C. Barua (translator and editor), *Reconsidered*, p. 240.

and drove to form a small Tai people. Most Tai people regarded themselves as independent, the Tai a large variety of groups was formed. In many regions where contact between groups of Tai people was possible, the exchange of marriage partners became the norm and this led to this was the formation of new Tai peoples between Tai peoples for mutual aid and defense. In general, however, the Tai people were widely scattered and not in contact with other groups of Tai people with a result that the western and northern groups were more in the south. The present day family of Tai languages and several dialects testify to the fact that since their spreading over mainland Southeast Asia there was no longer a uniformity and homogeneity in the Tai culture.

During the thirteenth century the Tai had not only conquered a multitude of small and petty states, but also they had taken over the lands which were in some degree the home of the various peoples of the part of mainland Southeast Asia. These were the valley now known as the Chao Phraya Valley the land towards the south and the Brahmaputra Valley the bulk of which now forms the state of Assam. Towards these lands the Tai were not considered by the Indians and there they interacted with long established civilisations to whom they had never been in Southeast Asia. In the Chao Phraya valley the Tai took up the state known as Siam and in consequence they had a more marked influence on the Indian civilisation and on the culture of the region than the lesser degree of that of the Burmese. In the direction of the west the Tai slowly built up an empire which included in what is now Assam and the whole of the valley now called Assam and the culture of the region developed a culture with distinctive Assamese traits.

It is not here the place to recount in detail either Samese or Ahom history, but since these are in any case partly based on records collected from the Tai of Assam a few paragraphs on Ahom history and on the intrusion of other Tai peoples into the Brahmaputra valley are given.

In 1215 A.D., in what may be recognised as a typically Tai fashion, a group of Ahom warriors under the leadership of Suk Ka Phra Suk Ka Phra set out from their valley in what is now known as the Chao Phraya Valley of their own. They moved through the North-eastern part of the peninsula and reached the vast valley of the Brahmaputra. They then moved on and subdued a considerable number of people and thus formed a kingdom of the Tai. Slowly but steadily the Tai ruled territory was extended and expanded for four generations Suk Ka Phra's son was succeeded by his son in 1250 A.D.

It has been argued that the 10th Ahom ruler in Assam, Jaw Kien I (Ta-khamti) probably was not a descendant of Suk Ka Phra. Various other families rose to end the Ahom. Until the thirteenth century the Ahom kingdom remained relatively small and was not a general Assamese history. The Ahom then occupied the region between the Brahmaputra and east of the Dihang river and the great Assamese powers lived farther westwards. It is only during the reign of Suk Heng Mueang (Suhannumeng 1437-1539) that the Ahom empire was greatly expanded. The Ahom fought then for the first time with success the Chao Phraya

* For details of the romanisation of literature at the end of this introductory Ahom words, see the Note on transliteration chapter.

[illegible]

The beginning of the eighteenth century marks a period during which the Malays came to become the major factor in the intertribal and large scale movements of the island. Several of the Malay rulers have been in favor of Hinduism, and many of the Malay interests in the region coincided with a period of Hindu influence in the region. An important society, by the time of the arrival of the Europeans, which made it difficult to distinguish between the Malays and the Hindus, however, many of the Malays married and lived with the Malays, and many other Malays. At present there are in the Malay peninsula still several hundred thousand people who identify themselves as Malays, even though they have lost the skill of speaking the Malay language. They can explain the legends and chronicles pertaining to their own history.

For the ethnohistorian it is of great interest to note that amongst the more important A- traditions amongst those who live in relatively isolated areas are those which undoubtedly represent aspects of Tai culture. A description of some of these traditions forms part of the foundation upon which these volumes are constructed.

[illegible]

where new data published in Volume I it has become clear that these three groups represent separate Tai traditions. Representatives of all three groups have been interviewed extensively on particular aspects of their traditional culture and customs to form three major bases of data which guided the comparative study of Tai customs.

Although Ahom, Khamti, Phakya and Khamti have in common that they claim to be Tai descent, the latter three have been treated quite separately from the Ahom. The Ahom became isolated from the mainstream of Tai culture almost exactly a century after the groups arrived relatively recently and they were able to preserve during the time that the British in India were suppressed by the Dutch and Burmese to keep some contact with relatives over the Patkai mountains. Whilst the Ahom were deeply influenced by the general Assamese culture and most of them became Hindus, the other three groups are staunch adherents of the Buddhist religion. What is known of Ahom history through old manuscripts has led to the conclusion that there are especially amongst the Phakya and Khamti many individuals who speak Tai at home. The Ahom dominate their Tai descent in a few areas of their culture, but the recent Tai immigrants can record a wealth of typical Tai customs.

Along with the whole range of Tai peoples in Assam provide a good basis for the beginning of a comparative cultural study for they represent an interesting case where descent is of Tai who were separated from other Tai peoples by one side by one with three groups of Tai who kept their culture alive.

SECTION 2- RESEARCH AIMS AND METHODS

From the previous section it has become clear that the Tai peoples are extremely widespread; they live in the plains of southern China, in the valleys of northern Vietnam, the land of the dominating peoples of Laos and Thailand, they inhabit many of the low lying areas of northern Burma and several Tai groups are also represented in Assam. Through geographical factors and also because of political circumstances the various Tai groups have effectively lost contact with each other. A Tai in southern Thailand has no opportunity of obtaining knowledge about Tai peoples in China, a Shan in Burma can be quite unaware of the fact that great numbers of Tai speak his local language. This effective isolation is one of the considerations under which the scholarly exercise in these volumes is built. Another important factor is the thought that this scattering of the Tai over many valleys separated by international borders and mountain ranges has taken place quite abruptly from about the beginning of the second millennium A.D. until the thirteenth century, when the Tai had reached all the regions where they can be found today. It has also been argued that before their spread over main and Southeast Asia took place the Tai culture appears to have been much more homogeneous than is the case at present.

This situation of isolation where type traits of one culture have become scattered into many sub-groups at a particular period of time and whereby each of the sub-groups has developed in its own specific setting makes for

method adopted to solve the research and the problems inherent in it. I was severely lacking in knowledge of the aspects of Tai culture and to assess all the evidence that could be assembled on those aspects only.

The approach to the research can be divided into several methodological steps. The first is the selection of a topic. The researcher selects a particular aspect of a certain ethnic group and formulates his subject. This selection is based on the researcher's knowledge of the particular group's past and present history and on the availability of ethnographic materials on the particular group. The second step is the collection of a number of sources of information on the topic. The researcher analyses systems of information that have been collected in the second book.

The second step is the selection of a topic. The researcher selects a particular aspect of a certain ethnic group and formulates his subject. This selection is based on the researcher's knowledge of the particular group's past and present history and on the availability of ethnographic materials on the particular group. The second step is the collection of a number of sources of information on the topic. The researcher analyses systems of information that have been collected in the second book.

The third step is the selection of a topic. The researcher selects a particular aspect of a certain ethnic group and formulates his subject. This selection is based on the researcher's knowledge of the particular group's past and present history and on the availability of ethnographic materials on the particular group. The second step is the collection of a number of sources of information on the topic. The researcher analyses systems of information that have been collected in the second book.

The fourth step is the selection of a topic. The researcher selects a particular aspect of a certain ethnic group and formulates his subject. This selection is based on the researcher's knowledge of the particular group's past and present history and on the availability of ethnographic materials on the particular group. The second step is the collection of a number of sources of information on the topic. The researcher analyses systems of information that have been collected in the second book.

¹² This has also been noted by R. Gombhach, "The Buddha's Eye, the Evil Eye, and Dr. Ruelius", *Buddhism in Ceylon and Studies on Religious Syncretism in*

Buddhist Countries (edited by H. Bechert), Göttingen, Van den Hoek & Ruprecht, 1978, p. 335.

inventory stage it becomes quite obvious that the more fully an ethnographic account presents the more variable it becomes for its exercise. The apparently trivial matters such as whether a fruit is eaten with hand or with whether one or two incense sticks are burnt or the exact pronunciation of a god's name become the building blocks of the later reconstruction of Ancient Tai aspects of culture.

The third stage consists in an assessment of which part of the collected data may be assumed to belong to the supposed Ancient Tai culture. The main criterion for deciding whether or not to include a particular aspect in the Ancient Tai tradition is the geographical spread of that aspect. If, for example, a certain distinctive trait is found only amongst Tai peoples who live in Vietnam, Thailand and north-east Tai, Assam and the neighbouring Shan states it may not be included amongst the items which belong to the Ancient Tai heritage. In such cases it is quite possible that the trait has been developed locally after its spread and so certain groups of Tai peoples took place in it as it has been borrowed from a neighbouring non-Tai group. However, if a certain aspect is a custom or belief common to Tai groups which may already or supposedly may have been in contact with each other since the spreading over of the Sino-east Asia took place, such as the Tai of Vietnam and those living in Assam, then a common origin appears likely. This criterion necessarily excludes borrowings from other cultures, but if the loan is supposed to have taken place with other cultures, these are likely to have taken place during the Ancient Tai period or before.

The sixth stage consists in a searching of available literature in order to assess to what extent the Tai tradition is shared amongst other peoples. In this searching effort it is made as full as possible to get the rich cultural tradition of the societies of peoples who live around the Tai. This search is determined by the findings on the Tai and it is directed only to establish cases of shared tradition. If possible, an assessment is also made as to whether the Tai were recipients of donors or whether it is more likely that the shared trait must be regarded as a common shared good amongst a larger group of peoples.

In the second volume two aspects of Tai culture are explored and subjected to the method treatment described above. The first of these topics arises from two interviews held at the beginning of 1979 amongst groups of elderly Tai Khamtiang in Sibsagar District, Assam. In the course of the first of these interviews it was revealed that these men had been present at animal sacrifices and that such rituals once formed part of the regular communal village ceremonies. The second interview provided corroboration of this information. The subject came very much as a surprise to me because I had been able to notice the predominance of Buddhism in the lives of the Khamtiang and Buddhism is a principle strongly opposed to blood sacrifices. During the ten months available between returning from the first period of fieldwork in Assam and setting out for a second spell a large amount of ethnographic literature regarding Tai peoples was consulted in order to assess whether communal sacrifices such as those described by the Khamtiang also have been recorded for other Tai groups. This search proved a very encouraging one that especially for the non-Buddhist Tai a sacrifice tradition was found to be still alive and that some vestiges of

sacrifices could also be found amongst some of the Bodo's group. It was therefore decided that I should also attempt to collect information about sacrifices amongst the Assamese Tai during the three months I was in the second period of fieldwork. The results of these enquiries which are reported in the second and third chapter of this book were extremely encouraging to warrant the inclusion of a separate chapter which may be traced to the Ancient Tai tradition.

The choice of the second topic in this volume was made only after returning from the second period of fieldwork when I became aware that the sacrificial traditions could be described in a very simple and direct way possible to add a second topic. I have long been seeking for an opportunity to write out the more traditional aspects of Tai culture in a book. My attention this topic was sparked more than ten years ago when I started the introduction of the seven-day week in Sivasagar and even started bringing masses of students to teaching on various subjects. I then gave a unit of history into Tai history. Systems of time reckoning which are discussed in chapters six and seven. From a research point of view, their very character makes for a careful, accurate and relatively simple study. Apparently a complete study of the archaic aspects of Tai computation of time has never been seriously attempted. I provide a very rewarding exercise which leads to a peek into the early Tai history from a rather novel angle.

As part of this section on research aims and methods I am obliged to mention some of the conditions under which research took place. The research upon which the bulk of this book is based was precipitated by the fact that I was in the process of leaving India. Only a year or so I had been able to make a study of the Khamti Phakey and Khamti communities in Sivasagar and Dibrugarh District in details which have been reported in Volume I. On my return in 1979 I had been reserved for coming day. Since such a period allows for more or less a lot of changes was chosen to try and make a few days' visit from where repeated enquiries to find some places could be made. Such a base was found in Dibrugarh University having offices in central Assam and one which I thought heads an Assamese Department. After contact was had I was asked to in the next few days for the duration of the visit as well as assistance in regard to fieldwork. It is thus that the campus of Dibrugarh University became the centre from where various research trips were made and where some informants came to stay and where much of the fieldwork was done took place.

Whilst apparently all conditions for field research were thus available circumstances beyond my control threatened to thwart all attempts to go outside Dibrugarh town too. This unfortunate factor was the political situation in Assam which has since the second half of 1979 developed into a confrontation between representatives of India's central government and certain dissenting sections of the population. It is not the place to describe the background of this confrontation or the history of some of the grievances which were involved in the matter. Many reports have appeared in the media on the matter and I do not expect to mention details and incidents which are when the work was planned to begin.

situation has developed. Last year's learning such as Abengorah University had long been unable to operate the campus has been cancelled notices. The disputes and war in northern Nigeria have paralyzed many aspects of commerce. These incidents produced a serious shortage of petroleum products, such as diesel oil and kerosene. On some days all traffic stopped and it took a long time for a few vehicles to ply the roads. Customs duties have been raised and the government has an income problem. His assistance and resources of which he could not be needed without great discomfort to all parties concerned.

[illegible]

Although it had been possible to become acquainted with the Assamese script, the — even a certain number of Assamese words I was unable to convey in any way in his system of signs, I was forced to rely upon interpreters. This time however I was better able to control the situation through the command of some Assamese. In order to cope with the rather sensitive subject — successes in British villages where such practices had long been worn off hampered by sufficient knowledge of the local language from a special interviewing technique was developed which consists of a preparatory stage involving interview translation analysis and evaluation and follow-up. Relevant details of this technique can be found at the beginning of the following chapter.

A note of transliteration

Unfortunately, there is no universally accepted method of transcribing Laotian words. The principles underlying the transcription of Ahom are quite different from those which Siamese words are written, there are

as a word related to the Chinese. The Sino-Indo word for the same tool. This approach is rather hazy, but the two meanings could hardly have been guessed from looking at the word in Chinese. When dealing with Chinese characters in the literature the author accepted Chinese characters in brackets so as to leave no doubt in the reader's mind as to whom is referred.

The Chinese words in this study were spelled in a similar fashion. Whenever possible the Chinese source could only be guessed from the context. In cases where the pronunciation was not clear, the spelling was given in brackets and a note was added in the margin. In the Chinese literature the symbol "ü" was used for the vowel sound "y" became "i", whilst "u" changed into "ue" and "j" into "ch" in all cases where it could be made clear from the context of the word. In cases of doubt the variant spellings were retained.

The Chinese characters in this study do not indicate a difference between the short and long vowels as we do, which I strongly suspect that Chinese does not have. I have therefore changed the Chinese characters for the short vowels to the long vowels with the exception of the character for "ü" which I have retained as a general bias in favour of short vowels which may not reflect the reality.

All the words in this study were written with a symbol indicating the tone. However, in some cases, such as that of Ahon, where the word was used in many cases they have been left without the tone symbol. It is a pity if they are mentioned, sometimes not clear which criteria were used to determine the tones. In this study it was decided to have all references to tones. In general the tone symbol in Chinese is indicated as a symbol for the tone. But in the Chinese literature of various Tai groups, it must be regarded as a symbol which serves the purpose of the exercise.

BLOOD SACRIFICES AMONGS THE ASSAMSE TAL

Methodology

In the search for information regarding traditional customs amongst the Khamyang, the Phakey and the Khamti the gathering of folk-songs on animal sacrifices occupies a special place. Whilst it is relatively easy to find a knowledgeable person with whom to discuss information such as old birth customs or the manner in which people used to be tattooed it is quite a different matter to elicit meaningful remarks on animal offerings.

In the past pigs were sacrificed have not taken place for a considerable time. In several of the interviews conducted at meetings there were only a few people alive who have witnessed such rituals which they may recall seeing in their childhood. The knowledge about these customs is therefore fragmentary and it is very difficult to ascertain the type of details which are of the greatest interest for this research. Secondly, these sacrifices form a subject which is never discussed openly. Sometimes people are even hesitant to admit that a pig was killed during which animals were killed and what he or she was working for took place. The reason for this reticence lies in the fact that the Khamyang and the Phakey and the Khamti villagers are devout Buddhists and they are afraid of the fact that they have seen Buddhists some times condemn them. They brought their Buddhist religion from Burma about 250 years ago. Remembering the fact that about 100 years ago there were village rituals during which animals were sacrificed and rice wine was offered amounts, in the eyes of many Assamese, to admitting that in a they were not very good and had to see the priest. The Buddhist doctrine and Buddhist precepts teach unequivocally that killing as well as the consumption of alcoholic beverages are actions which one should not do and which ought to be abandoned. Especially the subject of animal slaughter is strongly discouraged in sermons and Buddhist folk tales.¹

In general the Assamese Buddhists are quite sensitive regarding a subject which might be considered sensitive and their Buddhistism was not strong enough to provide them with the necessary feeling. This delicate feeling is partly the result of their being settled in a culture which is dominated by Hinduism. Amongst people of Indian descent they feel themselves to be the staunch upholders of a completely different faith. They demonstrate this by maintaining Buddhist monasteries and villages and by regularly donating to the monastic monks. Some of the farmers of Indian descent, especially those Khamyang who have brought their Talan and the Talavik of house building feel that the fact that they are Buddhist is a strong addition to their

¹ B. J. Terwiel, "The Five Precepts and Siam Society, Volume 60, 1972, pp. 331-343. Ritual in Rural Thailand", *Journal of the*

description as a people with a history and it is not just Assamese Buddhists who link them with some of the great and proud cultures of Southeast Asia.

Although the fact that they are Buddhists may seem important in the wider Assamese at the same time it is not a series of images with the wider world which are highly valued. A person's far more valuable image is as a Buddhist monk of India and not with people from all over the world. A highly-sage Assamese Tal may have been in the Sangha and in quest of a scholarship which are not easily given to Assamese. Enthusiastic lay Buddhists may join the Assam Buddhist Association and open a primary school with people from other parts of the world. Occasionally the Association may gather sufficient aid to send delegates to an international Buddhist conference and thus provide a few Assamese Buddhists with unique opportunities to have far and wide.

The wish to delve into the subject of evil and a dark side to life was there, it looked upon by some of the Tal with feelings ranging from disgust to anxiety. Some thought that the topic was not to be discussed with children who would do up their eyes which were better left open. Occasionally the worry was vetoed by the younger generation not to catch shameful aspects of the past. In order to obtain reliable information on this subject which was hidden and considered taboo, many interviews special attention had to be given to the work techniques and a short account the methods used to obtain the information contained in this chapter are set out. They might be of practical use for future ethnographers setting out to obtain relatively secret information.

The first introduction to the researcher to his informants was a method of importance. The villagers are told what the researcher is doing and the researcher is told what he has developed a interest in traditional Tal customs and how he wishes to record them for future comparison and analysis. During the interviews in sacred extra care was taken to ensure that a satisfactory introductory set of ideas was presented. The fact that knowledge of some village traditions was rapidly being lost and that somewhere there might be a demonstration of the beliefs and customs of long ago were stressed. The researcher's introduction of sacred interviews improved over time. Experience taught him except that it was better to mention the village generation's lack of knowledge of the past. After all there may be a powerful link between knowledge of sacred tradition from the village. In general the Tal were not a positive response. The need for a reliable record was fully seen and people with traditional knowledge promised to do what they could to ensure its establishment.

The topic of blood sacrifices was not introduced forthwith, usually a fairly innocuous item of interest began the interview. Subjects said for this purpose were aspects of traditional house building questions regarding traditional rain-making rituals or the details of the village foundation. Some of these topics proved so interesting that they will have to be discussed in detail in some other publication. The second topic concerned communal village sacrifices. First was asked whether a village ever held a festival or ritual and when the answer was affirmative further details were

requested covering the time of the sacrifice ritual took place who attended it where it took place what was sacrificed and the sacrifice was performed what altar was used for what the offerings were presented and information on any other detail that could be remembered.

Only on two occasions the interview proceeded smoothly throughout most probably because the respondent was old and well informed and themselves had attended a place with no other people. In most cases, however, the arrival of a young researcher aroused great interest and the interview had to be conducted with a few well known people watching the proceedings and commented amongst each other. Quick to find fault, under these circumstances the informant would not give a revealing knowledge on sacrifices. The sensitive persons would not have been dead willingly before they would have promised that they would presently speak about another topic, some would use evasive words in order to avoid talking about killing although their older would sometimes say a word or two so that they could not possibly recollect any further details.

If this occurred an effort was made to overcome the informant's reluctance by pointing out that it was quite understandable that we did not want to talk about such matters, but that it was a fact that long ago the customs existed and sacrifices must have taken place. With the aid of the interpreter it was pointed out that such sacrifices have already been reported for many centuries in the old and Buddhist times in South-east Asia where Tai people lived. In other words the details of Assamese Tai sacrifices would be of interest in order to learn more about pre-Buddhist religion. A second point was made, namely that informants need not fear revealing their knowledge since the basic outline of the rituals had already been explained by previous informants in other Tai villages. The present interview would take the form of a confirmation of some of the facts. Then the interview would be resumed with a question such as 'Exactly how often do you say and do the sacrifice take place when you were a young man?' It was found that once the shock of talking spontaneously about a sensitive topic was worn off one of the older men would proceed to give some details.

In order to facilitate the flow of information the researcher would endeavour to make the informant feel at ease in the discussion. If any elderly person indicated a reluctance to do something such a person would be encouraged in his manner, he would not be asked to bear the burden of a vast knowledge, the burden would be shared by several members of the community. Once again a group of old people would simulate each other to the researcher, a highly sensitive or important related event. In the hope that the conversation would become animated and that the chance of a respondent's mind becoming saturated with information would increase several precautions were taken.

In the first place the interpreter was instructed to allow people to talk even if the topic appeared to have no direct bearing on the main topic of research. He should refrain from interruptions and posing leading questions as soon as it was possible. Secondly, the relevant outlook of the interpreter had to be considered. It may be recalled how the first period of research was made possible by the informant being of a Buddhist

monk. During this second period of fieldwork the focus of work and his needs and relatives were again examined. He was interviewed and it was clear, however, that the very presence of a Buddhist monk in interviews of the sick and dying would have been a hindrance rather than a help, a representation of the Buddhist ethos that he was forbidden to speak about customs involving death, bereavement, and funeral. Fortunately, he permitted by an exception to the Buddhist precept of not conducting the interviews. His willingness to do so was a result of his contact with me, a Hindu, and his understanding that I was not opposed to such practices. In the course of the fieldwork, a number of points in the topic of research seem to suggest some new areas for study and further questions to be explored.

The interpreters' instructions and an interview protocol were developed in a workshop stage in which the research design and the interview protocol were discussed. In the case of interviews on subjects who are not familiar with the interview, the training requires extra attention. This involves drawing the subjects into the workshop situation, creating questions and awareness of the interview situation, and assisting the assistant with the list of questions. The participant is then given a pre-interview procedure. After an interview is conducted, the notes are taken, and a moment apart with the interpreter is made and its help points would be discussed and if mistakes were encountered, ways to avoid them in the future would be developed. In addition, the interview notes were devoted to listening to the interview tapes, not only to understand the content of the text, but also to listen to the background tone and manner when words were left unsaid.

The tape recorder used a small size machine which could be placed on the table and record without distraction. It was placed in a position of absolute responsibility in front of the subject. When the subject was not doing his homework the tape recorder was made to record just what would not be written down during the session. When the subject was recording from beginning to end. The tracks of the tape recorder were heard before him in several respects. Thus, I became an observer of the subject's instrument a short interval in circumstances which were not intended to make it. As it became an important factor in the subject's behavior, the subject's Networks were studied but mainly to see how he used the tape recorder. He posed and to note relevant gestures and situational aspects which later would help understand the tape. This tried to research in order to think about the direction of the interview itself. As the subject became more familiar with the use of the tape recorder, many of the key words and words there was a less and less of the interrupting behavior which was not intended. If a translation was necessary, the interpreter was asked to repeat the words by the subject what had been said and then repeat it to the subject. The tapes became more usable during the interview. The subject was very alert themselves as a way to word from the beginning to the end. They were repeatedly consulted during the interview. The subject was very aware and was with the field assistant and finally was asked to compare other interview results.

It must be understood that at first my knowledge of Assamese Tai script was very poor. The tool gave me some formulae to work freely

would need money. For that reason they should remember Khun Haang and Khun Chaang. They would not be withheld. From this time onwards, the Chinese government would assist the American, Japanese, and other groups to remember the victims of the 14 years of Pao-Ming and Kuang-Chow concentration camps. They would set up to 100 parts of the memorial fund here to Khun Haang and Khun Chaang.

On 15 November 1971, the addressee that, additionally, Khun Huang said Khun Heng was also involved in the particular case when a man from the village came with the king's (or probably representatives of the King) and was probably received when the Khmer Rouge first came to the village. He then told someone. If a Khmer Rouge individual was in danger of being executed and might inform the king, he was advised not to be executed at all. His village made a sacrifice to the king and Khun Huang and a king's throne and palace.

This story, known Haang a Kham Chhang, seems entered amongst a Assamese Khamrang group and follows a line of the Phakey or Khamti people who, it is said, were the last member ever having heard about foot. It is quite probable that there exists a little less solid basis of the story. The Khamrang appear to have entered Assam at a point much further to the south-west than the other two groups entering into the Shalabapatra Valley. It is, however, quite likely that they experienced difficulties with Nagas who, as he says, are not a friendly race, so it is rather likely that they came from where they are, either in various stages, but present legends. It is quite possible that the Khamrang leaders thought the Nagas were friendly and for a time, and that these warriors later became friendly, having the foot, they were not the only ones.

Regarding the area where Raaz Daew was performed the data from the semi-structured interviews show that there was some variation between different Khamsang villages. In Dsonggyi, just across the neighbouring Chumbawang people remembered that no sacrifices had been stopped some fifty years ago. Also in Powat Mukh no specific date for the last Raaz Daew could be recalled. At Powat Mukh the situation was complicated by the fact that a local government had taken place so that the Raaz Daew ceremony has been supported by a sacrifice of a female guardian spirit Naang Hua Tong about whom more below. In Rohon village a more specific date was established, it became clear that Raaz Daew had only been held once shortly after the village had been founded in 1949, six years before the time when the interview was held. Soon afterwards a Buddhist temple was built in Rohon and the ceremony sacrifices were supported by funds supplied by the Buddhist ethics. The Khamsang community for which it was established that Raaz Daew had continued until recently was that of Sarpaatar in the Goghat region where it was held for the last time just after the Second World War. Apparently people there had been reluctant to stop the ceremony for fear of courting disaster by displeasing the guardian spirits.

As for the time of the year when Raga Araw has been held it has already been noted that Chhapatha in variants were divided on their opinions on whether the ceremony took place just before or after Sangken. On this point some adherents of Disangpan volunteered the information that the

[illegible]

The usual sacrifices for Raat Daew were described as a black bear as mentioned in the first chapter of the *Shinshu*. On one occasion a Korean hunter captured a black bear, painted its head and neck red, and carried it to the shrine. It may safely be assumed that the bear was taken with the group. The Raat Daew was always that which consisted of a pig. The fact that it was shot by a hunter is not a drawback, necessarily, he reported a few minutes later and said: "After all, it is the colour of the black pig." The hunter then argued that the hunter should select the best animal to be sacrificed to select a beast with an even colour, one which shows no deformities. All animals were killed by a hunter, and were then hung on the outside of the permanent shrine, as the case may be. As to the method of killing, the pig was killed by a hunter, and the bear was killed by a hunter rapidly cut its throat. The birds were killed by cutting off the head. In all cases care was taken to kill the animal as quickly as possible. The person officiating at the Raat Daew was addressed by the name usually was the one performing the actual sacrifice.

The animals were carefully dissected up and the organs, liver as well as those of the birds, were carefully examined. After a long time no war-bodded even for the birds of the village. One bird, that perhaps would be able to predict in quite some detail what would be read by reading the signs in the liver. There were a constant effort at work as was seen to look in the future. In Power Mink special attention was given to the manner in which the swamps were used and the signs in the liver. I Sata pathar people and their war-bodded were seen to be working for a person who became possessed by one of the gods.

The meat was prepared in the usual manner. Only the entrails were thrown away, but the other parts of the parr were saved as paws, skull and

cans were placed on the altar together with the containers of beer and honey. With respect to the birds, all the hens, wings and heads were sent on their way to the sacrificial platter. In the earliest descriptions of the ritual it was mentioned that for each invited god a banana leaf plate was put on the altar and on this plate would be placed an oil lamp, wine, pieces of meat not rolled in a cone of betel leaf (the particular way of presenting it varies which is known in Assam as *thun tamul*) as well as parts of the sacrificed animals and a container with rice wine. Some of the informants could also remember a banana platter upon which each family head would offer an unpeeled areca nut. The whole put symbolises a formal welcome and this platter may be regarded as a token of the formal bond between the families of the community and the gods who have been invited. The *thun tamul* must be regarded as a completely different symbol. This ceremonial accompaniment to a good meal is here to show to the gods that they are offered not only meat and alcohol but also the substances which are used for a feast.

The officiating priest would address the various powers at work offering them the pig, the cocks, hens and ducks, imploring them to continue looking after the community, to ward off disasters and to help bring prosperity and happiness. Not long after this prayer the time for contributing the cooked meals came and all the men would receive an equal share of the meat, the other foods which may have been offered and the rice wine. These were eaten together. It has been described how informants at Chhara were disagreed as to whether food could be taken home. This problem was solved during the subsequent interviews. It became clear that the food distribution was only to those present at the ritual and that no man could claim a larger share than the others simply because he had more womenfolk awaiting him at home. However, once the food had been distributed, some men could decide to save some of their portion and carry it home. That would be a man's private matter to be decided by each man for himself. Therefore the two apparently opposing statements from Chhara can be reconciled: the one informant must have alluded to the formal rules, the other to the actual practice.

It has already been mentioned that at Powai Makh a variant of the Ph. Mucang ritual has developed and that this is called the worship of Naang Hua Tong. Naang Hua Tong is a female spirit, literally her name can be translated as 'the lady with the golden head'. She is believed to be the defender of the community who protects against war and disaster and ever since she has become the guardian of the village, the people of Powai Makh have changed their former Ph. Mucang ritual into one suited to her. In the past the Naang Hua Tong ritual began in the afternoon and it lasted right through the night until the next dawn, but in the much simplified version in which blood sacrifices have been substituted with gifts of fruit and incense the whole ceremony is rushed before dark. Naang Hua Tong is still remembered twice a year at Powai Makh. Just like the old Raaz Daew, the ceremonies for Naang Hua Tong take place at the *huran phi* outside the village. The first occasion for such a ritual falls just after Sangkhen and the second moment for remembering her is six months later. During the ceremony for Naang Hua Tong a total of seven individual sacrifices are prepared and offered by the priest, a basic difference with the Raaz Daew at this village during which sixteen gifts adorned the altar. The number

seven is related to the fact that Naang Hua Tong is reputedly one of seven sisters. The names of the other six could not be remembered by the villagers, they were not considered important, only Naang Hua Tong in her role of village guardian was of prime importance. In the past the rituals for the lady defender involved the offering of sacrificial meat and rice-wine. The blood was offered to the goddess first and then it would be used in the cooking. Evers, birds' wings and brocs legs would be roasted on a spit. Up to the present day the custom of decorating a *non kam* for Naang Hua Tong is observed. The village is then surrounded by a cotton thread, no strangers can enter and no villagers are allowed to leave. On such a day the early morning is exceptionally quiet for the customary sound of the pounding of rice for a day's consumption is absent.

It is therefore clear that all Khamyang traditionally shared the custom of regular communal sacrifices. It appears that the most important occasions for doing so was in late April and that a second occasion was in October. Essential features of the ritual were the killing of a boar and a number of ewes and ducks, the presentation of these offerings to the guardian spirits, the request for continued protection and the consulting of omens. The ritual was concluded with a communal meal during which the meat of the sacrificed animals was eaten and rice wine drunk. Only men could attend this ritual. Raaz Daew sacrifices have long been stopped in all Khamyang villages. Only a vague reminder of them can be found in the food offerings to Naang Hua Tong. There is yet another trace of Raaz Daew in present-day Khamyang ritual. This concerns the sand pyramids of the Khamyang called *in khang nu* which have been mentioned in some detail in Volume I. In Khamyang communities these *in khang nu* can be erected at any time of the year, compounds but there is also a large communal one, set up somewhere inside the village or near the monastery grounds. This great communal *in khang nu* is cleaned up and re-erected twice a year, namely once after Sangkren and in October. These times are the same as those when were traditionally set apart for Raaz Daew. More important for our study, however, is the fact that just after decorating the communal pyramid a Buddhist service is held to commemorate the ancestors, and two days later which feature largely in this service are no other than the heroes Khun Chang and Khun Chuang. The timing of this communal ritual, together with the fact that Khun Haang and Khun Chuang are publicly worshipped makes it easy to see that aspects of the old Raaz Daew ceremony have not been lost to the *in khang nu* and are re-enacted in Buddhist garb.⁹

b) The sacrifice for Phi Faa, or Sarak Daew

When discussing their non-Aboriginal sacrificial rites Khamyang informants often refer to those which were held in honour of Phi Faa, the spirit of the sky. In Assamese the ritual for Phi Faa is known as Sarak Daew in which *sarak* is apparently derived from the Sanskrit word *swarga*, "heaven".

Since writing Volume I an interesting CNRS Paris, Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient 1979. The fact that the Khamyang share the custom of eating and drinking of great eates and leaf of Khamyang is a great knowledge upon the meaning of certain aspects of the rituals.

occasions. The Sank Daew ritual would be concluded in the evening with a hearty family meal during which the white cock's meat would be shared by all.

c) *Sacrifices for Phl Huean, or Ghor Daew*

The only other sacrifice that could be recollected by the Khamyang was that for the Phl Huean, or 'house gods' which in Assamese was known as Ghor Daew. Sacrifices for the Phl Huean consisted usually of fowls, and these were presented to the house gods at the *san phu lang*, the most important house post which can be found at the eastern side of an inner room. The house gods were one and the same as the ancestors. They would receive such gifts regularly. There was no fixed time of the year which could be remembered as being particularly suitable for such offerings. Like the sacrifice for Phl Laa, the ceremony could be held by the householder himself and no outside ritual specialists would have to be hired. A remarkable detail in the sacrifice for the Phl Huean which was mentioned on several occasions was that the animal's blood was collected in some container and that some of this blood was sprinkled by the officiant using his left hand near the *san phu lang*. This sprinkling had to be done three times.

Sacrificial rituals of the Phakey

a) *The sacrifice for Phl Suea Mueang, or Sum Daew*

The recollection of former sacrifices amongst the Phakey was much vaguer than that amongst the Khamyang. This may be taken as yet further evidence for the idea that Khamyang and Phakey traditions were fully separate Tai cultures which for centuries had not been in close contact with one another. In Tipam Phakey village near Chabutra it is not possible to deny the possibility that animal sacrifices had once been held but at the same time there was nobody to be asked who had witnessed them and could supply ritual details. In the other major Phakey community at Nampakey there might be people able to assist for here too some ritual details are preserved in ancient customs. At the time of the Tipaminterview I had already reported on the Nampakey and a local informant suggested an investigation of this ritual there.

A Nampakey informant was asserted that once a year there used to be held a communal sacrifice for a powerful Phl Suea Mueang also known by an Assamese appellation *Sum Daew*. Phl Suea Mueang refers to the

at one end a decoration consisting of embroidery in red. It is an integral part of the general Assamese culture and used often to present to a guest as a sign of honour and welcoming.

¹¹ Not to be confused with the *huan phl*, mentioned above.

¹² The concept *Sum Daew* is also known in discussions about the oldest Ahom religion. Reputedly *Sum Daew* was an image of a god made of precious stone. It was of immense value and the Ahom kings used to worship it. Many people believe that the image was lost prior to the British period. However, there are

also many people of Tai descent who believe that the priceless treasure is still guarded in a particular family and that during the full moon night end March/beginning April the custodian will take the image from its secret hiding place, will put it on his head and show it to his circle of trusted disciples. Hitherto nobody has been able to throw light upon this report, and I am also not able to elucidate it. However, the act of placing an image on the head suggests the possibility that the image is a mask. Yearly dances in which sacred ancestral masks are shown have been reported for Laos and Vietnam. However, this remains pure speculation.

gods guarding the whole community. This sacrifice was the most elaborate Phakey sacrifice during which a buffalo, a pig as well as fowls were killed. For Sam Daew all the animals had to be white in colour. However, if a white buffalo were not available, the informant volunteered, it was possible to place a white cloth over the sacrificial animal thus creating the impression of a white offering. There was no other Phakey sacrifice involving the killing of a buffalo that could be remembered.

As to the question whether women were allowed to attend the rituals for Poi Sava Mueang there appeared to be no restrictions comparable to those existing amongst the Khamyang. Only in the event of a woman being at advanced pregnancy she would be well advised not to attend. The ritual still held at Nampakey, but Sam Daew no longer involves killing animals. Nowadays flowers and candies are presented to the gods.

b) The sacrifice for Phu Hung

One of the standard questions of the interview consisted of a list of animals comprising bird, snake, cat, dog, cat, snake and lizard and asking whether they were ever sacrificed. Quite unexpectedly a Phakey informant suddenly hated at the mention of a dog and told that under very special circumstances a red dog used to be sacrificed and offered to Phu Hung.

A dog sacrifice would only be considered when there had been a disastrous epidemic which had lasted for over a year and which continued unabated into its second year. When the decision was made to hold a red dog sacrifice the village's elders first decided upon an auspicious day. Then they selected a number of villagers who would have to perform the ritual for the welfare of the whole community. The number of men selected to do this task had to be odd, five or nine. These men had to appear personally; they were selected for their personal qualities and were not there as representatives. A relative of the community, hence a close relative was not allowed to take the place of one of these chosen men.

On the announced day each of them would take an early morning bath. Then each prepared to take up his ritual paraphernalia. This included a handful of uncooked rice from each of the afflicted households and also from those houses where nobody was. These two types of rice were kept separately. The men would then take hold of the selected dog with the reddish cloth and tie it on a leash. The animal was pulled in various directions and the one in which it was prepared to walk was taken as the proper one the whole party had to take. They proceeded until they were at some distance from the village and until they found a big tree on their path. At the foot of this tree a space was cleared of branches and leaves. During the sacrifice no fire was constructed, no mats or domestic containers were used, only material derived from plants. The immediate surroundings would serve with the exception of two bundles of thatch which had been prepared beforehand. These two bundles were put down in the cleared space, one bundle placed over the other in such a manner that together they formed an archway. The rice from the houses where the sickness raged was kept close by these bundles of thatch. Then the men addressed Phu Hung in a chanting voice requesting this spirit to cause the village's misfortunes to disappear and to accept this gift of a red dog. The dog was

laid over the hatch and killed. Parts of the dog, such as the liver, were then roasted over an open fire and the dog's meat was brought back to the village. The persons most seriously afflicted by the contagious disease might already have specified which portion of the sacrifice they wished to receive, but in the event that a person was too sick to do so, it fell to the village to decide what wish a piece was secured for him. According to the tradition, a person was bound to follow soon.

The men who had performed the ceremony were received back into the village with many precautions reminiscent of ritual pollution. Thus, they were not greeted or approached by any of the other villagers. A set of freshly laundered clothing would have been placed next to a green bowl of water outside their home, so that each man could bathe and change before stepping into his own house. Each of these men wore a white cloth around his waist, consuming only soft tea, and they had to spend the night separate from their families. Only the next morning could they join in the family breakfast and resume their former positions.

Sacrificial rituals of the Khamti

a) *Sacrifices for Phl Mueang*

In Borkhamti Gaon several types of sacrifices could be remembered, the vagaries and of these that in the neighbourhood of Phl Mueang was by far the most important. As far as could be ascertained, it was held for the whole community only once a year. No specific season was fixed, except that it was held at a time when it was convenient for all. The festival began one afternoon and lasted throughout the following night and day, ending the next morning. Outsiders could not attend the village being closed during the ritual. The last time the ritual had been held in the community was in the year which began in April 1975. There was no restriction regarding attendance of women and children other than the general prohibition of menstruating women on attending religious ceremonies. The place of holding a year's Phl Mueang sacrifice was somewhere outside or at the edge of the village, not necessarily near a tree. Any convenient place, or a rocky one near a stream, so that water for cooking would be available, would do.

As for the animals sacrificed during the Phl Mueang ritual, only ducks, fowls and pigeons were readily listed. After some hesitation, it was mentioned that the Phl Mueang ritual could sometimes also be celebrated with a buffalo sacrifice. In the latter case, two posts were driven into the ground and tied together at the top were used to hold the animal in a bull. No special significance was given to the gender of the animals. A villager with the appropriate knowledge was the presiding priest and assisting in the movements he could help from any of the many Khamti clans.

On the day of the ceremony, the whole community would be busy with the general preparations. Some cooked large quantities of food, others collected the many containers with rice wine. The elderly men would generally assist the priest with supervision of the preparations for the religious ceremony. The killing of the sacrificial animals took place at the appropriate time and great care was taken to collect the blood from the sacrificed animals. Each householder brought a container for this purpose and

also there would have been taken along some pieces of cloth as well as the ropes used for tethering cattle. The blood was wiped over the cloth and ropes. The bamboo-bamboo baskets in which ducks, fow and geese had been brought would also be wiped with sacrificial blood. These baskets were later taken back to the pens and hung in the cow sheds or pig sties or near poultry coops. This sprinkling with sacrificial blood was considered of great importance. For in this manner it was believed that for the duration of a year a good crop of rice would be acquired. A final detail which could be remembered was that areca nuts and betel nut were not found amongst the gifts to Phu Mueang. It is very likely that the people of Berkhanti Goun had no such offerings as gifts to the gods. Rice-wine, however, was prominent amongst the gifts.

b) Other sacrifices

Amongst the other sacrifices which could be recalled were those for the Phu Huen, which consisted of the killing of domestic animals in order to honour the household spirits. This was purely a family affair. The flesh would be cooked and eaten by all family members. Other sacrifices were those connected with the elaborate funeral rites. The pasturing which buffaloes, pigs and fowls were often killed.

OVERVIEW

From the above summary of findings it may be concluded that the Khamyang, the Prakey and the Khant peoples had a particular custom and that these customs have already been described. It is very probable that its large-scale communal nature, at the same time, is general. The dates for the main performance of the communal rites are within the first half of this century. The evidence of increasing and decreasing influence of Buddhism on the various aspects of the customs which appear to belong to the Buddhist belief and practices. The information which could be gathered from the local blood sacrifices appears rather scanty. On the amount of sacrifices that were devoted on this topic and the large number of people who have given accounts of their personal observations. Prohibitions reflect the fact that the sacrificial traditions were already in decline long before the Hindu communal sacrifices were entered. What here has been described may therefore well constitute the last remnants of a more varied and richer set of traditions.

From the facts which were established it has become clear that there are both similarities and differences in custom between the groups. Khamyang, Prakey and Khant peoples all bring at least one or two times a year an animal, for which was dedicated in all cases to the guardian spirit of the valley called Phu Mueang or Phu Sava Mueang. In all instances the ceremony was held outside the village. Everywhere the largest possible sacrifice or offerings in value tended to be a buffalo though a pig was not uncommonly the main offering. In all instances it was deemed important to collect blood.

Apart from these similarities in general areas, it was clear that there were also considerable differences in what has been recorded for

the three groups. The Khamyang share amongst each other a belief in two folk heroes who are included in the prayers asked at the communal feast. These two heroes are unknown to Phakey and Khamti. The Khamyang prevent their women from attending the Raaz Dacw ritual but both other Tai groups have no restriction in that respect. The Khamyang *na vung*, the perfunctory altar built at the south side of the ancient Khamyang house, was not encountered amongst the Phakey and Khamti. The differences recorded are not simply aspects which single out the Khamyang as different from both other groups. The Phakey, for example, have heretofore been the only group where it was specified that white animals ought to be given to the guardian spirits. Of the three Tai peoples considered here the Phakey were the only group for which a red dog sacrifice could be reconstructed. The Khamti proved different from both other groups in the importance given to the wiping ritual.

Such differences are partly the result of the fact that Khamyang, Phakey and Khamti represent three distinct strains of Tai culture each with its own history and no known period of intimate contact or cultural exchange with one another. However, the discrepancies may also be the result of the fact that so few details could be remembered, especially amongst Phakey and Khamti informants. It is, at least theoretically, quite possible that on a future occasion, in some isolated Khamti community, in a far off outside the house, I found. On a future occasion some venerable Khamyang spirit priest may recall a red dog sacrifice. It is evident that there were a need to be especially cautious regarding Pui Mueang, a white animal ought to be found and offered. There is little doubt that some of these recorded details go back a considerable time and may be related to a common Tai tradition. It would be tempting to relate the customs regarding the Khamyang *na vung* with the Samese *tan phra phum*. Both types of shrines are found at some distance of the house and the types of information which is communicated at the shrines is similar. However, before such far-reaching conclusions might be drawn the cultural aspects in question must be subjected to the treatment set out in the Introduction. For, as always, the aspect must be studied for all Tai peoples since it is well known differences must be recorded and analysed. Our investigations noted and the surrounding peoples' customs checked for cultural borrowings. The same applies to the Phakey red dog sacrifice. The Khamyang custom of holding a Pui Mueang sacrifice sometimes at a second time, and any other interesting detail recorded. Before deciding whether they fall within a general Tai pattern or whether they constitute divergences from the norm, a wide range of sacrificial customs must be noted. Following the pattern set in Volume I, first the customs of the Ahom shall be discussed and then the customs of various other Tai groups shall be presented, moving eastwards over the map of the relevant part of Asia.

AHOM SACRIFICIAL RITUALS

The historical background

In order to assess sacrificial customs which can be found amongst some present-day Ahom groups it is necessary to consider in broad outline relevant aspects of Ahom religious history. There can be little doubt that, when the Ahoms entered Assam at the beginning of the thirteenth century, they came with their own native religion. Already in the earliest written literary sections of some of the *Buranis* sacrifices are mentioned. Thus Lueng Don (Lueng Don, one of the chief gods in the Ahom pantheon) is reported to have sent Pou Ph. Sue (Ph. phshu) to the earth where he took his abode and a *tanung* (a papia-pae) and Lueng Don admonishes the Tai rulers to make a buffalo sacrifice at the time of the eighth Tai month.¹ In a similar exhortation to the ancestors of the Ahom rulers were told to sacrifice a bull at the end of their first year of rule and then a cow and a buffalo in a subsequent year. This great royal yearly sacrifice reputedly should take place at the beginning of the fifth Tai month (corresponding to March-April, subject to the consideration in footnote 2 above). During this sacrifice Lueng Don and a great number of other gods would descend to accept the offering. The performance of this ritual ensured a continuation of the heavenly protection.²

In the early sections of the *Buranis* there are also clear indications of the fact that the Ahoms used to practise chicken sacrifices and that they used the offerings for predicting the future. Also there is a section of the published *Buranis* which appears to be taken from a very old Tai law book in which traditional punishments for major social crimes are laid down. Of special interest for this study is that frequently the culprit had to perform a sacrifice. The animals specified were the buffalo, the cow, the ox and the pig. On one occasion the buffaloes and even offered to the gods as restitution after a serious breach of the law are described as animals of a white colour.³

Therefore there can be little doubt that during the thirteenth century a sacrificial tradition has formed an integral part of many Ahom ceremonies. According to oral history even the name of the Patkai Bittor range, which lies between northern Burma and Assam, is derived from the Ahom words *pat* meaning "cut" or "sacrifice" and *kat* meaning "chicken". Resulting when the Ahom leaders crossed the mountain range they made a truce with leaders of another ethnic group in the region. The contract was sealed by killing white cocks, dipping the swords in the cocks' blood

¹ On the pronunciation of Ahom words see the *Note on transliteration* at the end of the introduction chapter of this volume.

² G. C. Barua (translator and editor), *Ahom Buranjis*, p. 11. The eighth Ahom month at present corresponds to a solar

month which falls in June and July. Probably it refers here to an earlier Ahom year month which fell approximately in the same time.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-7.

[illegible][illegible]

In this study it has become clear that the many Hinduized Aham do not form a homogenous religious group. There are many sects and sub-sects, each possessing its own scriptures and priests. There is considerable variation in sects and practices. While some prefer to concentrate on all the religious references regarding a single god and consider other gods to be other incarnations of their own one, others address themselves to different segments of a larger pantheon. While the Mahapuranas offer pulses and grains, some of the other groups regard a religious training incomplete without an animal sacrifice. Some ritualise use of cow urines consisting an essential part in their ceremonies. It is possible to recognise in this so-called Hindu practices two primary views. On the one extreme end there are the strict Ascetics who see the purely devotional religion and who avoid procreancy and abstinence. These will give a certain types of

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

* *Ibid.*, chapter VI.

fish or meat. At the other extreme there are the Tantric Hindus who have no food restrictions whatsoever and who regard a vegetarian diet as a base practices element which are disliked in every position of hierarchy. These two extremes have been seen before in popular speech. The Ahom who stress their purely vegetarian dietetics and a diet does with are sometimes called in Assamese *kei* or *kei* and *okei*. About who these at the other end of the spectrum are the *poku* or *choked* types. Occasionally one Hindu Ahom may find it a little taste if he himself with another. It may occur that some refuse to partake of meat or that a *kei* Ahom may refer in a disparaging manner to a disgusting food habit of other Ahom people. The latter may in response refer to the 'low element' of some Ahom groups and consider no wonder that the great and wise Ahom kingdom came to an end when there were segments of the populace running away with Indian ideas. However, this position may not be described as a rift in Ahom society, it is the basis for the development of sub-castes. It is little more than an opportunity to bicker. In actuality there are many Vashnoides who are willing to relax their food taboos. Moreover the number of divisions amongst Ahom Hindus is so great, religious as well as political, that they do not really admit such broad categories as *kei* and *poku*.

In this varied scene of Hinduized Ahom peoples it is very difficult to recognise aspects of their religious beliefs, a which are reminiscent of customs in Southeast Asia. The group which appears to have kept some traditions which may eventually be traced to the Ancient Tai are the Tantric Saivites. This may be seen in the practice of performing a sacrifice in the house or in the ritual manner of presenting a bowl of rice wine. It is possible that some features of their sacrifices also have from Southeast Asian customs. However, the aspects thus far recorded of these sacrifices are basically Hindu. These include the chanting of a devotional song by all chief participants at the moment the victim is killed, the method of sacrificing the animals and the ritual dances which accompany the sacrifice.¹⁰

When it is traditional to describe the history of Ahom religion as thought in terms of one whereby Tai religion is replaced by Hinduism, it is also possible to present the same story from a skewed Tai Ahom perspective putting in the foreground those Ahom who did not readily accept Hinduism, who retained their own religious specialists and ideas. From this rather unorthodox perspective it is seen that Hinduized Tai was by no means immediately accepted. During the early centuries of their expansion in the Brahmaputra Valley the Ahom court may have taken some interest in various strands of Hinduism, but the general populace appeared to have retained their old Ahom world view and religion. The kingdom's expansion and the concomitant absorption of considerable numbers of non-Ahom peoples may have paved the way for the first large scale conversions to Vaishnavism which accompanied the missionary activities of Sankardeva and his disciples. Even then Ahom kings retained respect for the old Tai religion.

¹⁰ A short description of the principles of Hindu sacrifices is found in J. A. Dubois, *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*, edited by H. K. Beauchamp, 3rd edition, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1968, pp. 510-3.

not was not into the same fold. In seveneenth century that an Ahom king formally embraced Vaishnavism and sponsored it in favour of Tai religion. The militant personality of Hinduism which followed the king's conversion did not meet with and in his reign the king created a considerable social division. It may be said he created the king's partisanship in religious matters continued till his reign and revelation which came along with the king's death was only reached under a king who was not wholly committed to the Hindu religion. Sue Par Phaa also known as Gerdhar Saha (1681-1705) apparently was sympathetic towards the sect of the Doodhinga. He was a very pious and traditional Ahom king. In the last years of his reign it is thought that he was probably the last king to have taken his followers of Tai religion in face of an ever increasing Hinduism. From the beginning of the eighteenth century onward the number of people adhering to Ahom religion dwindled. Sue Par Phaa's successors were inclined towards Sakta Hinduism and it became an accepted fact that the king was a sponsor of Hinduism. It has also been said that the king was a devotee of the goddess. It was dominated by the Measuria, the chief of the Measuria, who threw the government and ruled the kingdom. The Ahom royal family continued to rule the kingdom till the end of the eighteenth century.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, a rough estimate given by the number of Ahom who do not fall under a label Hindu. Hamilton considers the number of people who have not yet been converted to be one-fourth of the whole Ahom population.¹¹

It is here not argued that traditional Ahom religion remained unchallenged or that it remained unchanged in the face of the Hindu challenge. As a rule, it is a general fact that traditional Ahom religion continued to exist till the end of the Ahom state. However, a fact which is usually mentioned in Ahom history books is that the traditional Ahom religion managed to maintain a foothold in the more isolated villages. Until the present day, the Ahom religion is still in existence in the more isolated villages. The traditional Ahom religion was not completely destroyed in the eighteenth century and these features are in the following sections of this chapter.

An important factor which has helped preserve Ahom religion was the fact that from a very early date, probably as early as the twelfth century A.D. onwards, the Ahom people have made use of written scriptures passing on their knowledge in pieces of bark and later on bark made paper. There still exists a large number of old Ahom books some of which are of years of age. Others are more recently copied, it is interesting to the student's interest in some aspects of ancient rituals and practices. Some deal with house building some contain various Ahom practices to be observed during state ceremonies and yet others provide illustrations of auspicious and inauspicious signs with the help of which a priest can predict the future. Un-

¹¹ S. K. Bhuyan, *History of the Ahom People*, p. 53. The Doodhinga referred to as Doodhinga, often to be Hamilton are one of the traditional

[illegible]

Methodology

Once the hydrate release was seen in the different sections amongst the wells were understood in the means to obtain up information regarding the same. A surprise became apparent. The best information was likely to have been from those A and J owners where the oil release had been seen to a large extent. In the case of some pockets where this was not the case, it was found that a great deal of work was still pursued both in the case of the one and the other as well as in the case of the other ones.

While the Khasi and Jaintia people and the Khasi interviews presented considerable difficulties, partly because the local traditions are so much more than 100 years old, partly because people were loath to share their information presented to it and its abuses. Contacts were established and an impression was made. In fact some of the few individuals which at some time at the time the response was occasionally to be a just. The list of persons referred to possess ancient documents and unique knowledge about Assam - the few grew alarmingly. Many people were eager to know about the research, but a number of these specialists. However, when such information was being up it became clear that, while these "specialists" were generally interested with a wish to acquire knowledge about the former Assam culture, they knew actually very little. The scanty information they possessed passed from one among these people to the next, and the knowledge was not being passed on to the next generation. The knowledge which was being lost to the next generation was interesting and was of the kind which had not been recorded in the traditional ceremonies.

Due to the high number of such observations it was necessary to travel to those parts of the island and take more observations. A correlation was also made with the data in the field reports. The first begins with those reports were used as a somewhat fragment. The data has been more complete data and a result series of more extensive data gathered to help. As a result of this, there is more a better overall understanding

speeches and answers thereon. Only a small amount of information which could be used for this volume was obtained in this manner. Nevertheless, on several of these occasions it was possible for the researcher to attend traditional Ahom rituals some of them especially enacted for the researcher.

From the formal visits and the attendance at ceremonies it became clear that the samratraiti was still alive. Also it proved impossible to wait for the public enjoyment because transport was difficult to arrange and the fieldwork time was limited to a mere three months. Therefore it was decided to discuss the main Ahom sacrifices in detail with the samratras who had officiated at them on many occasions. In order to attract a crowd I travelled to such places very early in the morning and stayed at their houses unannounced in the hope that a private interview would be allowed. This was a vain wish, and in the subsequent hours a considerable number of rituals would be discussed but the crowd had been provoked and curious bystanders would be unavoidable. The interview, therefore, was therefore arranged in such a manner that the ritual itself and the sacrifices were placed at the beginning and matters suitable for a more general discussion at the end. This method worked satisfactorily and the following paragraphs are largely the results of several of these interviews.

Sacrificial rituals

a) The communal ritual called *um phra*

Undoubtedly the most important communal Ahom sacrifice is the one known as *um phra* or in the literature sometimes as *umpha*. During this ritual the chief powers of the Ahom pantheon are worshipped. This ritual was performed on rare occasions by the Ahom kings and he was personally present. It is mentioned that it was held with a considerable grandeur and numerous sacrifices of Götteropfer that it was held "for the good of the crops and the state" in other words, it was a state ceremony believed to increase the chance of a good year. It used to take place once a year at Dibrugarh, Sibsagar or Jorhat. Since the advent of the Ahom kingdom the ritual has often served in an aversive. It no longer takes place at yearly intervals but is celebrated once every seven or more years. The last time it was performed was at the end of May 1974 near the site of the 13th Ahom royal palace at Sibsagar district. If the revivalist movement which has been mentioned above continues unabated it is likely that the ritual will be performed there again. However, since it is a ceremony which is rather difficult to perform and costly it will probably not regain its former annual character.

In the days of the Ahom kingdom there were reportedly two optimum times each year for holding *um phra* and the date would be chosen. The first one was at the traditional New Year festival which fell in April and the second one occurred in the latter part of the month of June-July. At present the day is decided by a committee of traditional Ahom elders, who

"P. Gogoi, *Tal-Ahom Religion and Customs*, p. 15. "P. B. T. Gurdon, "Ahoms", p. 236.

we had astronomical time back to our system some point of time for maintenance with the need's like a wave was enabled to be performed in two days.

The first day is fully occupied with preparations. The sacrificial
rooms are cleaned and decorated, the dishes and altars are made from
fresh raw materials such as a live animal, a peacock and a deer, and at
some last the animal skins are cut. The sacrificial site is divided into
three sections, one at the front in the morning. The other two are situated
next each other on the left and right side of the altar. In each of the three
altars, the peacock is sacrificed and the skins are made. The tripartite
sacrificial ceremony is then ended, as is the Ahimsa ceremony into
the ritual of a perpetual hunger. The ceremony stands for the great
and the universe. The ceremony is a series of classes more and less
linked with the ceremony. The ceremony is a ritual for the powers
and the universe, and the ceremony is a ritual where given and
taken is in the universe. In the ceremony there is a ritual of a ritual
process, a ritual ceremony, and the ceremony of the construction of a ritual
in a section.

[illegible][illegible]

²² *Ho Jang* constructions are extremely old, for they are mentioned in the earliest parts of the Buranjs. G. C. Barua (editor), *Ahom Buranjī*, pp. 28-29

are respectively for the full moon deity²⁰ Khao Khao (the round altar) Then: Doi Ma Square altar next to Khao Khao (the square altar) (for him is the central deity of the ceremony) and finally Nang Si Sao (the long altar). On the long altar (the long altar) there is name seven offerings and are covered and placed on a table on the long altar for seven offerings (the offerings) M. K. M. Ta. K. M. (the offerings) and finally Yua Sna Phra (the goddess of the offerings) at the offering place at the right hand side of the long altar).

At the earth section of the sacrificial grounds there are four chief altars as can be seen by their remarkable shape. Each offering place is namely covered with a five-chambered roof in which a diamond-shaped opening has been left in the front through which offerings can be passed. From left to right (as seen from behind) at no point are altars are dedicated to the same deity. Phra Mac Thai, Nang Si Sao, Nang Khao and Aa Mee Nang. Further to the right there is a place kept free for offerings to minor powers belonging to the earth section. These gifts will be placed in a row on leaves on the ground.

The third and last section behind it is left hand side with a diamond-shaped altar of the type seen in the earth section. This is probably the altar for Lang K. Ri. Then there is a diamond-shaped place for Nang Si Sao followed by a long altar with seven subdivisions for La Lang Khao, three sections for Ph. Lo Khao and further subdivisions on a separate altar for Ph. Ka Tho.²¹ Just as with the earth section a considerable space is kept open for offerings to minor powers where in minor offerings for minor powers can be placed. The names of these minor powers could not be recalled although it is known that the name of the god whose gift comes at the last place is Chao Phok Chao Dam.

In the middle between the left and right sections of the sacrificial grounds, yet another post serves as a shrine. This is called the Kh. M. (the post) for Doi Ma. Ph. Ra. (the post) is a powerful god standing for the power of nature. This pular is fastened to the stem of a banana tree in which five layers each of a different kind of herbs have been stuck. It is at this post that after all the offerings of the section of the sacrificial animals are presented first. Doi Ma. Ph. Ra. will accept persons offerings at the foot of his pular and he will be able to inspect the varied gifts.

The types of offerings to the gods are various and include oxen, elephants, horses, buffaloes, cows, various kinds of horned and hornless

²⁰ This list, like others below has been constructed from several interviews with one group of traditional Ahom people, of whom one has actually served as officiating priest in the front section of the *um phra* ritual. It is not necessarily an exhaustive or even an authoritative list. From my observations it appears that priests have considerable freedom in assigning meanings to ritual aspects as well as in procuring for whom an altar has been built. It is thus possible that other priests would offer varying opinions, or that other versions will be recorded at some future date, hopefully

fully by persons who have been able to attend this rare and important ritual. Since, however, there are no other detailed descriptions published and since the group of informants contained some very knowledgeable persons I have decided to present their views on the *um phra* ceremony in some detail.

²¹ The Ahom for "seven" is *chit*.

²² The informants were not completely certain of the details in this section. The list here represents a statement in which different opinions have been reconciled.

deer, pigs, goats, horses, ducks, turkeys and peacocks. Nowadays elephants, horses, buffaloes and deer are used. It is often said that the cost is but a trifle for the pleasure and satisfaction which is obtained. *Patha* (dog) is not *phra*. With respect to the ceremony prescribed for the consecration of animals, very little information could be obtained. At one occasion a black dog was chosen for the ceremony, but it suggested *patha* and in another it was said that either a white or a black dog was chosen. It would appear, but that at present it did not matter what colour dog was chosen.

For the three days until the beginning of the festival, the village with the hundreds of tiny altars will be preparing for the primary festival. The preparation of the many tiny altars is the process and continues every night until the week end of the festival on the second day. The preparation of the altars takes two days to complete. The second day is the day of the day sacrifices. The activities are peaceful and they consume so much time that there is no opportunity for the ritual leaders to relax until late in the evening when the crowds assemble. One of the early important stages of the ceremony is the consecration of water. Priests will carry a new bamboo container from a mountain stream to a long container with water for washing the altar with a stalk of a sacred plant such as the *huk* (bamboo). The bamboo stalk is the stalks that hang at the eaves and the stalks are always used to sprinkle with this water. The priests will serve as drink of this water and also cover their heads. Another important stage is the presentation of offerings to De Mulué Ptu Ra and their bearing out to the shrine where they will be sacrificed. A priest will begin at the shrine and send his section and work to the next. The reason for this is that the priests view themselves as a part of the world of the deities and the fire is always left to the priest and he must be able to see it. This altar can also be viewed as the traditional Awa ceremony, altars and gods are arranged according to the ritual as observed from the place of the officiating priest.

The front section, where the *ho lung* rises high in the air, is the first to begin with sacrifice. In a sacrificial ceremony it is said the animals are killed by *chiao* and by *shen* and *chiao*. These other two sections the priests have been told to use by the chief of the sacrificial services. The *ho lung* is used for the offerings that are to be burnt because it is presented at the appropriate altar. The *chiao* is taken out of all the animals and kept safe for the proper place and time. At each altar the priest and his helpers will cast incense and burn incense presenting an array of gifts. The nature and number of the offerings that are to be offered depend upon the position and use. At the *ho lung*, for example, where gifts of 1000 are offered and 100 are four separate offerings per day, three are burnt on the *ho lung*, two are burnt on the *chiao* and the *shen*. The *chiao* is used for the proper place for offering money. Cured medicines, pills and other medicines. It is significant that in the days of the Aungmye Thawonkyi we found a way that is possible as a formal gesture, which was intended to recognize the organizers for the costs incurred. Nowadays however, privately offered gifts are placed there together with work and food only as a welcoming gesture. The three main places are the *ho lung*, *chiao* and *shen* all each contain a pair of chickens and a large amount of rice, a few pieces of fermented rice

[illegible][illegible]

It has been pointed out that the Ahom gods and goddesses amongst Assamese seem to correlate some of the Aryan deities and goddesses with Hindu deities. Thus it is often stated that Lang Dima is none else but Indra and that Yau Seng Pura is but a Hindu Saraswati. There is one sort of weakness attending this correlation. The Ahom pantheon and its Ahom equivalents do not presents a strict correlation to the Aryan correspondences.²¹ At first sight such a correlation may seem to appear to be a natural strong link of affinity, but on closer examination it is seen that it is, however, a weak external link. The correlation is based on the title. I exemplify this by Lang Dima and Yau Seng Pura. Sanskrit is a heavily flexed cases where a great number of nouns can be at the end. Lang Dima and the attributes of a heavenly deity and Yau Seng Pura with the goddess who guards the palace is a natural knowledge. Whether these correspondences can be regarded as a true correlation, Lang Dima and Yau Seng Pura are examined in detail as a matter where further research is necessary. A first reading of the relevant sections of the Ahom Saunggyi Senggyi may an Indra like aspects in Lang Dima is seen in the following. Credit problems are possibly equal to the gods as Lang K. Ri and Siva and Pha Pin Bet with Vajra. There is another section of the Buranji that the characters of Lang K. Ri and Pha Pin Bet are clearly based upon these Indian gods. There are other entries in the Buranji that the Ahom equivalents of Surya, Chandra and Anamandya are Lang Dima, Lang Jima and Lang Jima, respectively. These are not the Ahom equivalents for a simply a fair translation of the Hindu concepts and mean nothing more or less than "day", "moon" and "fire". Another series of so-called Ahom equivalents are simply Ahom pronounced repetition of the Hindu panthe such as Phayun for Varaha, Chak K. Ri for Siva and Tvaun for Siva. None of these works for an Ahom text as text. The entries are false translations

⁸⁷ P. Gogol, *Tal-Aham Religion and Customs*, pp. 5-8.

of Indian elements. The first is the equation of Maekha with the Ahom word for 'power' and the second concerns the traditional Indian Naga with an Ahom word *ngak*. The Naga is an aboriginal Naga who lives in marshes and ponds and it is not clear that Naga. In actually to be possessed here is a opportunity to present at least one convincing correspondence for the Ahom and the Naga. The Naga word *ngak* is recognised by the same as the word *ngak*. The first correspondence can be further criticised, but the evidence is given should suffice to demonstrate its main weaknesses. It is clear that it is reversed that the great majority of the major Ahom powers which were enumerated in the description of altars is a *gum phra* and not an *ahom* or an *ahom* in the *Gum* that the whole evidence seems to have the opposite of what it intended to demonstrate, namely that the Ahom and the Hindu of the Hindus must be seen as hastily unrelated and so creating the unseen powers.

During *gum phra* a great number of ritual Ahom gods and goddesses are worshipped. Indeed, it has been argued that the ritual practices an overview of at least the major divisions in the pantheon. Since so many powers are propitiated in *gum phra*, it is natural that one or more of the are singled out in other Ahom sacrificial rites. By discussing a few of the smaller-scale offerings the attributes of some of the gods and goddesses become somewhat clearer.

b) Sacrifices for *Phu Mae Thao*

Whilst *gum phra* is held for the benefit of the whole Ahom community there are also several types of sacrifices held for the welfare of a household. One of these is the ritual to propitiate *Phu Mae Thao*. Literally the name *Phu Mae Thao* means 'old mother spirit'. Her name has been mentioned in the early section of *gum phra*. Whether or not it is *Phu Mae Thao* who needs a special sacrifice is discovered by marital means. If so, there have been a few signs, through misfortunes, that some kind of success may be purchased. A particular household. A ritual specialist called in and with divination it may be established that *Phu Mae Thao* is the cause of the party.

The offering ought to take place at the home. A sacrifice for *Phu Mae Thao* can be held any time of the year, and it is usually performed in the evening time. The best animals to offer to her are a white goat, a white duck and a white cock. Offerings include a pig, a rooster, a fowl, a female. These include bananas, bread, earthenware, and beautiful pieces of cloth, as well as a well-shaped food tin, a metal container and a small knife for cutting are a must. There is considerable attention given to a proper and pleasing array of these goods, by which *Phu Mae Thao* is a most important and powerful goddess.

Reputedly, it was to *Phu Mae Thao* that human sacrifices once were offered regularly. This may have occurred once a year during the reign of the Ahom king Siva Smita (Sue Ton Phaa, 1718-1744). According to oral history at that time there was one clan named the *Sar* which every year provided a young man to be offered during the ritual sacrifice ceremony. Such a man ought to be in good health and without any scars or deformations.

which might obscure the process and defeat the purpose of the ceremony. The victim, at least, was not to die in vain, as an offering to the function of the sacred land, our sacred temple. As for the priest, he is to be the state official who is to lead the ceremony and to be held responsible for his priest and tell the people that it is to be given to the process. In this version at least it is not clear that the goddess herself has chosen her own victim, that neither a king nor the priests could be held responsible for these human sacrifices.

It is quite likely that the basic facts were true, and that actually the Ahirani was taken to the island as a slave. As far as can be ascertained, the Ahirani was the nephew of the Chinese official Ch'ing-tai, who was called to the island to deal with the prisoners. Pish's, who was a Chinese official named T'ang, was at the famous "copper tea set" after dinner ceremony. It is true that its real value was only a few hundred dollars. Pish's was the known and worshipped man in the community, and the Ahirani named Koshak, or "crazy old man," had no other value except to be a man who lived at the shrine for Koshak, and at the same time to be a man who provided details which confirmed the Ahirani's story with the Ahirani's story about the Ahirani.

Here from a period unknown down to a comparatively recent date human sacrifices were offered year by year. It is said that latterly the Ahom kings gave up for this purpose malefactors who had been sentenced to death. In the past, however, always forthcoming, a certain special tribe (kheh) of the king's subjects were held bound to provide one and in return the members of this tribe were exempted from all taxes, levies, dues and market tolls, etc. It was necessary in all cases that the victims should be of a certain age and when the king was to be offered a sacrifice, even the boring of an ear, rendering them unfit to be offered.

The strength of the motivation to be freed the highest motivation arises, not that person who was able to escape, residing in a colony with knives, sticks, etc., but that man who is prevented from leaving. Nothing there is to be gained, and even he does not know how it was done. The situation is comparable to that of soldiers being sent out on missions which will cost them their lives. Another source of motivation is equal to that one. You do not see soldiers rewarded for such basic facts, but you do know how to deal with them in extremely difficult situations. Probably some of the strongest motives for good approval and disapproval constitute stronger motivating forces than is generally thought.

Later records have it that the sacrificial fire was lit at the temple and a portion of the sacrificial animals was roasted and was reserved for the priests and the king. The remainder was used for the king and his household and was shared with the poor. The body was thrown into the pit and the head was a gift to the king. It seems to be the same as the goddess. The estimate of the date when this custom was abandoned varies among researchers – from 1000 to 10000 years ago. It is so obvious, but an exact date cannot be fixed. It is likely that the practice of the sacrifice was abandoned in the 10th century.¹⁹ Whatever the exact date, the abandonment of the practice is

²⁰ S. Endte, *The Kacharis, De hi, Cosmo Publications*, 1975, p. 94. ²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 94

Thus, when more or witnesses for the event three fowls were used, the method of reading was completely different from the spirit to which the altar was dedicated was not the same. These variations are partly the result of the continuing influence of the traditional Ahom priests have to interpret and elaborate what is more or less a living residue of a bygone traditional expectations and written records. It is not probable that the number of fowls killed depend on the occasion or on a priest need in order to satisfy himself regarding a situation and to be able to predict the best course of action. With the time and the modernity, the case is striking the one described by Barua (1967) as a *saught murga* appears more authentic, whilst the *ayung* is more of a makeshift by the flaying of an individual technique, possibly used as a means of circumventing the exorcism. The question as to whether Yaa Sra (Pha) or *Yaa D* is the power to be addressed is probably not significant. A reading of Ahom mythology suggests that both are the private deity of a person in his capacity of the power who has instituted the custom of this method of divination, and Yaa Sra (Pha) being the person who passes on the knowledge and detailed instructions.

When it comes to the remaining details, the two accounts demonstrate that the ritual technique has not changed. This method of casting auguries was the most formal and solemn one amongst the Ahoms. It was for example, the appropriate ritual to be performed when the king wished to find out whether it was safe to attack a certain enemy and if so, when and in what manner this should be done. The ritual can also be held in order to obtain advice regarding private matters. Since this involves the invocation of a priest who must be found willing to perform the difficult ritual and a following interpretation, it is a very reserved ceremony where advice is needed in truly baffling dilemmas.

Two skulls are not the only parts of the animal which are examined when a person wishes to know the future. It is common practice to check a fowl's tongue, bone and interpret its position. Furthermore, the skull can be easily split into two halves, each of them shaped not unlike a ka-tis shell. Two persons may throw these halves up in the air and watch whether they come to rest with the outer side uppermost or fall in such a way as to expose the inner part. This game may be played between bride and groom in a friendly manner in order to find out which of the two will be more lucky. The person who first manages to toss the skull half so that the outside is up, is regarded as the winner.

e) A sacrifice for *Lai Lung Kham*

In the traditional Ahom religion seven offering places are reserved for a deity called *Lai Lung Kham*. In the traditional Ahom pantheon *Lai Lung Kham* appears to be connected with illness, both with cattle disease and human illness, especially that of a malignant character. The present-day Ahom villagers who are still practising traditional Ahom ceremonies recommend the use of modern medicines, but hold that these will not be fully effective unless the purchaser worships *Lai Lung Kham*.

*G. C. Barua (translator and editor), *Ahom Buranji*, p. 19.

It is thought that during the days of the Ahom kings there must have been a regular state-sponsored sacrifice to La-lame Kham for the welfare of the country. At that ceremony, reputedly, rice and sugar were offered to La-lame Kham. After this ceremony had taken place, the king and his hangers would travel to the very edge of the kingdom, a part west of Garohati, just downstream from Nalbari, called Dewesar, where the Koch kingdom began. Having arrived at the border they would ritually curse a sluiceway in a gesture of securing the country and preventing the entry of evils such as epidemics.

f) Sacrifices for the ancestors

Apart from blood sacrifices which were often held during elaborate funerals and which have already been described in some detail in Volume I of this series, there are also among the Ahoms regular sacrifices performed at home which are said to be for the general benefit of the deceased members of the family. This is known in Assamese as *matuk* or *matuk*. It is referred to as *dam phui*. Every year there are two months which are considered to be especially suitable for such rituals. The first is the sixth Ahom month, known in Assamese as *da-dak*, during which the traditional New Year feast is held. It corresponds with April-May in the international calendar. The second month during which the ancestors need to be remembered is during the twelfth Ahom month, known in Assamese as *Katik*, which falls in October-November. The ceremonies on these two points of time are not identical. In April the offerings must be purely vegetarian and include a good selection of food items. There ought to be also some rice cakes and rice wine as well as a piece of areca nut and betel leaves. Often there will be as many individual trays and individual trays prepared as there are individual ancestors whom one wishes to honour. On the second occasion, later in the year, a chicken will be sacrificed. *dam phui* is typically a family ritual: the head of each family presides over his own ceremony and no outsiders will be invited. It takes place in the kitchen, the most sacred place in traditional Ahom homes. If this kitchen cannot form an upright pole which forms part of the house construction, called a *tan-tam*. This pole represents the ancestors. In the Barua give a summary description of the ritual. First altars to the gods are constructed and are a betel leaves, rice wine and fruit are offered. Then two further altars are set up for the ascending generations.

... which are to be the ancestors of the family. ... and the first of the gods is the ... The offerings to the ancestors. The members of the family have to bow down and seek blessings for the welfare of the whole family⁸⁹

The ceremony is held in the evening and if there has been a chicken sacrifice the family will share the meat amongst themselves.

The timing of the two ceremonies suggests that the formal remembrance of the ancestors is connected with the celebration of New Year. In April this ritual is timed so as to be in line with the New Year of the Indian calendar and in October-November this may well represent a survival of the Tai calendar for there can be little doubt that between the twelfth and

⁸⁹ L. Barua, *Social Relations in an Ahom Village*, pp. 92-93.

first Tachon month was the old New Year. This matter is dealt with in some detail in the second part of this volume.

There exists an old Ahom story of an extremely elaborate version of a *lam me phi* which was a fully developed state ritual commemorating the ancestors of the ruling families. This original ritual has survived to our day, albeit in a watered-down form. It is usually known as *me dam me phi*, a name in which the words *dam* and *phi* apparently refer to the ritual for remembering the ancestors. It is a little curious what the word *me* means in this name. One informant suggested that it originally could have been a ritual called *me dam me phi* of the country of the ancestors, the abode of the gods, and that the word *me* here has become a parance before a new form. It, however, represents but an interloper's 'hunch', and, if any trace of the existence of a former spelling is found, the spelling *me dam me phi* ought to be maintained.

At the time of the Ahom times the *me dam me phi* celebration was attended by the king and his senior ministers as well as a large number of followers. It took place at the great cemetery for kings and nobles at Charadei and the festivities would last several days. There were many sacrifices during the ceremony, reportedly including elephants, horses, bullocks, and various types of deer, pig, cocks and hens. These animals were offered together with a large array of fruits and sweetmeats.

At *lam me phi* was celebrated every year at Charadei. The proper time for the celebration was in the month of May, during the Assamese month of *Phalguna*. However, it differs considerably from the state ceremony it must once have been. In the first place it has been much abbreviated. Whilst originally it lasted several days nowadays the whole ritual is over in a few hours. At present it is a sacrifice have been called, probably in an effort to prevent them in the hands of the stricter Vaisnavites who may be expected to be averse to it. The main purpose of the organisers appears no longer to be religious and strictly religious but rather under the pretext of a commemoration of the former rulers a *debatary* *me phi* for the most fervent members of what has been called the Ahom revival movement. Political considerations seem now to outweigh religious ones, and the student of traditional Ahom customs will need to consider these exigent contemporary circumstances. So much the performance of *me dam me phi* nowadays shows considerable Hindu influence. This is apparent in the inclusion of the Hindu ritual of *nyak* in the process in the manner of recitation of the mantras and at least in the late performance of the ceremony in the inclusion of milk in the food offerings.

Nevertheless, a thin substratum of traditional Ahom aspects can be recognised. For example, at the left hand side of the offering grounds there was erected a *ho lute*, an altar on four posts connected with the ground by a mealy ladder raised over with the aid of a bamboo pole split into four which was wrapped with a white cloth. The bamboo post rose high up in the air and was decorated at the top with a piece of banana tree trunk shaped like a banana flower. Behind the white cloth a variety of things were piled together with a large container with rice-wine. To the right of the *ho lute* as a fact in the priest's position a long row of fifty-two vertical discs stretched out and during the ceremonies some

offerings are placed in each of them. These lines are not very far apart, the first two pillars which have governed the Ahom people in Assam are King Sae Ka Phaa onwards.

Of special interest is the fact that, at some distance from the long row of dishes, several circles in the procession are erected in the path of the circle of offerings a pillar is erected. This pillar just like the one seen at Don Milang Phu Rai was an altar of Joring *um phra* is made out of the trunk of a banana tree and is provided with a large number of lamp holders. The *um phra* is a part of a pillar is not very special to a power but is considered to be a ritual object which is set alight when contact is being made with the unseen powers from above. The pillar's main function appears to be as a support. The *um phra* at *um phra*, which appeared to be in the centre of interest when the first men here possessed had a total of twenty two lamps. The *um phra* observed in the road on the eve of the festival had three. The most remarkable that larger pillars had two hundred and one having thirty two lamps. The *um phra* is also found in the form of every Ahom village and to be there it is called *um phra* and is greater size than the *um phra* at *um phra* and the *um phra*. In the temple the *um phra* is usually ten layers and it never exceeds ten having ten lamps. The *um phra* with the central *um phra* this makes for a total of a hundred and one *um phra* lights at the same time several times and there is talk of it being in Assam. The number stood for a large number. Another aspect of the *um phra* which is a ritual object is that the Ahom ritual is that the *um phra* priest will carry a bowl of water by a small prayer in Ahom language and the water is sprinkled over the ground as well as over the throng of devotees and spectators.

g) Other Ahom sacrifices

Blood sacrifices form part of many other Ahom rituals. For example chickens may be killed during an *um phra* ceremony of the ancient *um phra* ritual. The *um phra* ceremony has been extensively described in Volume I and it is not necessary to repeat the same. Other sacrifices may accompany a *um phra* ritual such as that which is offered for a sick buffalo and which Ahom farmers know as the *um phra* for Mr. J. Kh. During this ceremony a miniature buffalo is carved from the root part of a banana tree and a miniature male figure is placed on its back. This male represents Mr. J. Kh. He is dressed with a small piece of black cloth and provided with a miniature black turban. The priest brings this small buffalo and its back rider to the sick buffalo and then he invites Mr. J. Kh. to come (presumably Mr. J. Kh. stands for the sickness which is exposed). He then takes the carved scene to the forest. There a black cock and a black hen are killed and placed in a small altar together with green unripe bananas and some sweets made from rice powder. The buffalo and his rider are at once placed that they face east. A further cow is killed for the spirits (a person in Assamese known as the *um phra*). The animal's blood is collected in a container and this is offered at the altar together with the *um phra* bones. Some feathers may be stuck in the altar. After the formal presentation of

the gifts the image is turned so that it now faces west. The meat of the birds can be taken home and eaten by the family.⁸⁰

Apart from various sacrifices of which an example has been given, there are also a number of other rituals which are accompanied by a small sacrifice. These are known as *pa-hung* (the Year). However, since the material brought from the Khamti, Phake and Khamti centres are in the same category as those in sacrifices, in case of epidemic a cessation of all other sacrifices would lead to a complex field which can better be dealt with separately.

General remarks

It has become clear that blood sacrifices form an essential aspect of traditional Ahom religion. At the same time it ought to be noted that there are also traditional ceremonies where, at least in the form they are presented at the present moment, no animals are killed. For example, the *phahung* ritual which takes place at the centralised temple is free from bloodshed, and the ceremony is only to honour Yau Seng Paray so proceeds without sacrifices. In addition there are festivals related to the annual growing cycle such as *pa-hung* which take place without blood sacrifice. These traditional rituals which are not accompanied by sacrifice are, however, in the main, purely Manicheo-Buddhist. There are signs, too, when there is great need for the preservation of things that in the past they may have been accompanied by blood sacrifices.

In the chapter on ritual, it has been given to the more communal *pa-hung* ceremony. This ceremony has proved to be remarkably special in that it was held on a high level stage. An array of deities propitiated there and the idea may safely be held that none of the chief powers were omitted. Therefore the *pa-hung* ceremony of the *pa-hung* place into three categories in a special way. It seems that the Ahom pantheon itself could be divided into three groups: a group of heavenly powers, who are given the particular honour of the ceremony, a group of earthly deities, chief of whom are the *pa-hung* deities and a group of honorary powers living near to the regions above the ground. The ritual paraphernalia concerned in *pa-hung* and other Ahom rituals described also need to be surveyed carefully. The most important sacred shrine is the *ho lung*, which consists of a platform with a high ladder and a pointed "roof" of white cloth the central bamboo rising up into the sky. The most common altars consist of square or rectangular platforms raised knee-high above the ground on small stumps. The earth deities in the *pa-hung* ritual are given a different altar. These offering places with their dome-shaped roof may symbolise caves.

A series of remarkable objects of great importance were the ritual pillars. During *pa-hung* rituals are two and they seem to represent quite distinct symbols. The front one is a square also a small round piece of painted material with a banner on top and a circular elephant may be added. The front pillar has been received with a considerable number of lamp holders which put it like the post of a pin cushion. The

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 94. Barua describes a variant to Mo Jakh whereby only one black duck was presented.

second pillar of the *num phra* ritual is devoted to a god. In fact, all the sacrificial animals are presented there and at the time when the *num phra* is sounded an offering is placed at its foot. Basically this second pillar seems to be the same as the lamp pillar used during *gum lam me phra* and the large lamp holder in the central point of the traditional Ahom temple. A ritual object which proved puzzling was the bamboo chain which connects all the altars in the front section of the *num phra* grounds. None of the informants could think of a reason, other than that it had always been used for the inclusion of that chain. The fact that these pillars are raised high up above the central altar suggests that they may represent a symbolic connection between heaven and altars.

From the detailed description of some of these Ahom ceremonies it has also become quite clear that these rituals which are taken by the Ahom people to be fairly 'pure' Ahom are replete with Hindu influences. Many instances have been mentioned where such influences are quite clear. It has been shown that in one instance, namely in the east of the Ahom gods with gods of the Hindu pantheon, the influence appears quite superficial and for the analysis, it can easily be 'peeled off'. In other instances it will prove much more difficult to sift out Assamese and Ahom elements. When it is noted for example that the presentation of gifts to the ancestors takes place in the kitchen, the most sacred place of the traditional Ahom house, this feature seems to have come from Hinduism. However, the fact that one of the upright posts in this kitchen is dedicated to the ancestors and known as *sao tung dam*, has strong Tai overtones. So it comes therefore, Hindu and Tai beliefs have blended. One day when it may be very difficult to decide whether a ritual actually belongs to the Hindu, the Tai, or some other tradition. In the Ahom ceremonies, for example, he noticed that people make use of fresh leaves from the jungle as well as the succulent green sheaths from the trunk of the banana tree in their traditional ritual containers. It is felt that recently cut plant material is clean and pleasing to the gods. This attitude is Ahom shared with many surrounding peoples and the only method of finding out whether certain features of this belief go back to the typically Tai tradition is to do the examination of details, first for the whole range of Tai peoples, and then amongst the neighbours

SACRIFICIAL TRADITIONS AMONGST OTHER TAI GROUPS

The Shan

There are relatively few ethnographic accounts dealing with the Shan of Burma and most of these consulted did not mention blood sacrifices. Seidenfaden provides a few remarks scattered through his book. He refers to three types of occasions during which sacrifices used to take place. The first one is the funeral of a Shan prince which used to be accompanied by human and animal sacrifices. Reputedly these customs lasted well into the sixteenth century.¹ His second reference to Shan sacrifices deals with the foundation of palaces, bridges and city gates. In pre-British times it was the custom to bury a man or a woman alive under these foundations.² Finally he relates how it was believed in Ching Jung that a terrible spirit haunted a lake near the capital and how it was the practice, at least up to the British occupation, to appease this spirit by visiting, debauching and abandoning to the wild animals four virgins.³

The first reference deals with funeral customs. The report fits in with what has been noted in Volume I of this study and needs no further comment other than that Seidenfaden does not tell us from where he obtained his information.⁴ The second example, which mentions human sacrifices at foundations, is most interesting in a wider perspective for, as we will see later in this book, there are trustworthy accounts of very similar practices for various regions of Thailand. Seidenfaden's last account of human sacrifice is the most difficult to assess. Not only are all references missing so that it is impossible to find out upon what type of information the report is based, but also the detailed descriptions of the ritual which would make it valuable for this analysis are lacking. Until the present day I have not come across other accounts of visitation and immolation of virgins for religious purposes amongst the Tai.

Yearly Shan communal festivals include one to the spirit of the market place. If the people omit to present this spirit with such an offering it is believed that destructive epidemics or famine may result. Reputedly every leap year special gifts are offered when Shan hats are burnt in the grounds of the chief's court house and meat is cooked and offered to the spirits who are requested to look after the town's welfare. Again this account is devoid of the ritual details necessary for a comparative survey. Somewhat more helpful is the mention of a Shan community guarding a shrine of the "heart" of the *muang*. This guardian spirit of the *muang* apparently has a brick altar which is situated at a holy tree. On the first day of the festival in honour

¹ E. Seidenfaden, *The Thai Peoples*, Seidenfaden's customary attention to Bangkok: The Siam Society, 1958, p. 42. (scholarly detail)

² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁴ The book was arranged, posthumously, from rather rough notes and does not reflect J. H. Telford, "Animism in Kengtung State", *Journal of the Burma Research Society*, Volume XXVII, Part 2, August 1937, p. 135.

of this spirit a tray is prepared on which there are jars of rice, betel, animals, cloth, tea, tobacco and various things. The tray is placed on the altar and then taken outside the town where a bull is killed in this manner: the evil spirits will move arm and leg, starts at a start and led away.¹⁷ This stage of the described ritual approaches the authentic version of the typical Tai ceremony as described by A. G. Leach as *phu mahiang* for the Tai of Assam, as *Kabunt* for the Naga and as *phung* for the Black Tai. The *hallas pua* ritual described for the Ache in the previous chapter may constitute another variant pattern. I will continue the ritual for the *gashan* spirit in the *hallas pua* ceremony. All heads of households assemble at the big tree in the front of the shop.¹⁸

The Lue

Also for the Lue there is mentioned a ritual connected with general customs, and there is no need to repeat the detail. As far as I know, there exist several eye-witness accounts of a sacrificial ritual for the *gashan* spirit, also amongst the Lue is known as *Phu Mreang*. At the end of A.L. 1357 such a ritual was attended by Izukowitz, a trained observer, to a few details which prove relevant for this study.¹⁹ At the village of *Chabate* to purchase a buffalo, and the adult men had to go on a day's journey to a altar just outside the village. Women are not found in the procession, nor they are excluded from the ritual. The buffalo is tethered to a stout pole which stands in the ground in front of the altar. The latter consists of a platform some six or seven feet high, covered with mats and *phung* etc. This altar, covered with white cloth, is headed by the *gashan* spirit, being looked after by its own priest. To the left of the altar, the three powers propitiated is *Phu Mreang*, the priest of the *gashan*. The other two are guardian spirits of nearby *sa* mines. The priests kneel and pray to gain the attention of those guardian spirits. But no answer is intended a going is intended. A number of the Lue of *Chabate* are hired for the purpose, then comes forward. He goes round the animal and then kills it with a knife. He goes round the animal with the knife, and then he goes round the animal in a northern direction, this is interpreted as a sacrifice to the *gashan*, the power. The hiring of a Lue for this task is a common practice of Buddhism, none of the Lue wishing to perform such an act.

The buffalo, having been killed, is cut up into twelve parts. The severed head is placed on the altar, with the animal's nose pointing to the north. The meat is cut into small pieces, and dishes are prepared. On each of the twelve places on the altar, bowls of food are set down. The priests partake of one part each, and then formally invite the powers to partake of the meal. They said:²⁰

"On this occasion we invite *Tao Fa Luang* (in our transcription this is probably *Chao Faa Luang*), the Great Spirit of the Heavens, who is

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 167. The appearance of clay images of domestic animals may represent a substitute of real animal sacrifices, presumably under Buddhist influence.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

¹⁹ F. M. Lebar (et al.), *Ethnic Groups of Mainland Southeast Asia*, p. 213, citing

²⁰ The following account is based upon K. G. Izukowitz, "Notes about the Tai," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*, Stockholm, No. 34, 1962, especially pp. 76-77.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

falling into the area. The buffalo sacrifice at Dai Khan took place in the month of June if the rains are late.²⁰

Northern mentions various other sacrifices which were regularly held in the region. One of these was held at Ban Na for the spirit called Ph. Luang Chan Chai. The kings of Chiang Mai and the people living between Chiang Mai and Rangoon used to venerate this spirit and at regular intervals they offered a buffalo sacrifice. From the time that Ban Na was placed under the administration of Rangoon, the local practices of the custom for buffaloes were no longer available to be kept. Furthermore there used to be sacrifices at Chiang Mai of a bull, bull, during the traditional New Year festival and on the seventh month there were also a number of small chickens were kept but in times of emergency a pig to be offered and it was an appropriate gift. In the sixteenth century the Chinese Ming kings used sacrifice a buffalo before sending out an army. At Rangoon there were yearly sacrifices of a black and a white buffalo. Recently the custom was abandoned at the beginning of the twentieth century.²¹ The administration's acquaintance and involvement with this type of sacrificial ritual during the nineteenth century is borne out by Rangoon's report that as he used to lead the region of Mueang Lak had to pay had a *buffet* of coarse silver on account of sacrifices to the country's protecting spirits.

These sacrifices are another name for public feasts as the buffaloes, pigs, and poultry, together with the spirits, which are provided, are consumed by the people.²²

Buffalo sacrifices are mentioned for various other occasions. The king of Chiang Mai in the course of an attack on Chiang Mai sacrificed a white buffalo before firing a cannon.²³ In another account when King Silkarat of Chiang Mai sent an army to Mueang Nan a sacrifice was needed which included a white buffalo, chickens, ducks, as well as gifts of mats, seats and betel chewing equipment.²⁴ Furthermore during the treaty of 1809 between the king of Chiang Mai and the ruler of another *muang* a buffalo was killed its blood mixed with alcohol and this mixture was drunk during the formal act of friendship.²⁵ Finally it is reported that sacrifices took place at the Chiang Mai city pillar *luk nan a si*. At the official installation of the pillar a pregnant woman was impaled in order to create a strong and fierce protector spirit of the city.²⁶

The Siamese

The thirteenth century inscription of King Ratan Khamhaeng of Sukhothai tells how the ruler of the kingdom was to make offerings to a mountain spirit,

²⁰ C. Notton, *Annales du Siam*, Volume I, p. 70.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

²² P. Lefèvre-Pontalis, *Notes sur des annuaires siamoises*, *Annales du Musée Guimet*, Bibliothèque de Vulgarisation, Volume 45, 1926, pp. 35-36.

²³ C. Notton, *Annales du Siam*, Volume I, p. 205.

²⁴ Reported in A. R. Colquhoun, *Amongst the Shans*, New York, Paragon Book Reprint, 1970, p. 256.

²⁵ C. Notton, *Annales du Siam*, Volume III, Paris: Geuthner, 1932, p. 93.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 111. The text mentions thirteen fowls and thirteen thousand ducks. The latter amount seems excessive and not in line with what may be expected during Tai ceremonies. I suspect a mistake in the manuscript used by Notton. I have not been able to check this with a version of the original.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

²⁸ C. Notton, *Annales du Siam*, Volume I, p. 205.

June once a year, at the beginning of the rice planting season. After the rain rice, the fowl's tongue bone is examined to see whether the season will be good.²⁹ In order to find references to Siamese sacrifices I checked through scores of publications which have Thai customs as their subject. Thus far this search has yielded no results. The nearest these books come to mentioning an animal sacrifice is when they report that a person ought to offer some meat on certain occasions when a spirit-tamper is sought. In all cases it is implied that the animal is not slaughtered near the altar but killed somewhere else, preferably by someone else. During my own fieldwork in Ratanakum province I witnessed and took part in such a ceremony, which in this instance was intended to invoke the powers in order to make a batch of young men, who had recently been tattooed, invulnerable. This ceremony was held on the most sacred place, namely, on the platform in front of the main Buddha image in the Buddhist temple. Amongst the gifts which were prominently displayed on this platform were a pig's head and four trotters obtained from the butchers in the nearby provincial capital. Later the head was cooked and shared amongst all those who participated in the ritual. A similar ritual is described in the famous Siamese poem *Saphan Rueang Khan Chuang Khan Phuen*, when Khan Phuen and Phra Kaew raise the spirits in order to obtain invulnerability. They offer a pig's head, chickens and ducks.

Although at present the Siamese appear to refrain from blood sacrifices, they have maintained in the rural areas a rich tradition of village guardian spirits. Such guardian spirits have a temple in the periphery of the built-up area and a community of devotees (chao) who offer just before the monsoon rains are due. Gifts to the village guardian spirits include usually ancho, boiled chicken, boiled eggs and a few made cigarettes, as well as a single stick of incense candles and flowers. Some social scientists who have carefully observed these rituals have recently reported on their findings.³⁰

In contrast to the monthly ceremony, attendance at the annual one is considered obligatory for all village households. Every household is required to send a household representative as an official member of the community to lead the ceremony as priest. At the same time, the present Agri-Pastorals reportedly take some thirty to forty years under whose influence they will sing, joke, tease, tell stories or dance. Sexually explicit behaviour is not permitted. The ceremony is held at dusk, after the evening meal, and the participants are accompanied by a large number of relatives and friends. The ceremony is not referred to the fair, but is held near Puu Taa's shrine....

These details in using the aspect of spirit possession are reminiscent of the annual communal sacrifices recorded thus far and it is plausible that

²⁹ Phya Anuman Rajadhon, "A Note on Divination by Ahoon Deodhas", *Journal of the Siam Society*, Volume XLIII, Pt. I, 1955, p. 53.

³⁰ A similar substitution has taken place in Laos, where four pig's heads and sixteen trotters are amongst the gifts to the spirits. See Chao Kham Man Vongkot Rattana, "Les rites du culte des phis au ho vang-as a Luang-Prabang", *Bulletin des Amis du*

Royaume Lao, Volume 6, 1971, p. 99.

³¹ Kathleen and Phornchai Srirapap, "Puu Taa: A Description of the Guardian Spirit Cult in the Pak Phl. District, Nakorn Nayok, Thailand, and its Implication for Rural-City Migration", Paper No. 8, presented at the Thai-European Seminar on Social Change in Contemporary Thailand, 28-30 May, 1980, p. 9.

the present of a black chicken is a survival of former sacrifices. There is no doubt that the white fowls (urban) birds is widespread in rural Thailand. Ordinary school-boys were present during the presentation of the paper and a boy remarked having witnessed similar rituals in "their" rural region.

The Tai of southern Thailand

The literature on rituals of the Tai of southern Thailand is similar to that of central Thailand in that no animal or ritual blood sacrifice is found among surviving customs. This probably is a reflection of the force of Buddhism in the region. However, there are customs which apparently have not been greatly influenced by Buddhist ethics and precepts. Thus, an account of ceremonies observed during an elephant drive says that blood sacrifices were known. The sacrifice which was intended to ask the *phu* to protect the hunters consists of³⁰

seven fowls, five ducks, five blue crabs, three or five horse-shoe crabs, the head or flesh of a pig, one bottle of spirit, some tubes of scorched glutinous rice as well as of ordinary rice, some tomatoes prepared with coconut milk, two bamboo baskets of flowers, three green coconuts, some red sweetened cakes, and white balls made of flour or ground rice, some *khanom laa*, a cake similar to the former, rice-wafers, and some boiled rice.

After it is established that a thanksgiving feast is held and for this is needed: "three ducks, three fowls, spirits, three hawk and three horse-shoe crabs, one bamboo rat..."³¹

The Tai of northeast Thailand

In a Thai book on old customs in the northeast of the country rituals for the ancestors and those of the Means are lumped together.³² Formerly, then, in the first year of the new year (A.M.) people would kill animals such as cats, fowls, pigs, ducks, etc. fowls and offer these to the *phu*. These sacrifices were offered because of drought or even worse rain might be withheld. More recently is noticed by S. Phang that once the spirits were used to receive a certain type of animal sacrifice it is could not be changed to a different type of gift without causing the spirits' displeasure. In the same source there is a description of a chicken sacrifice and finally a *phu* that is very similar to that mentioned by Pava Anuman Rajachonavee. This is the *phu* in honour of *Phu Laa Haek*, a spirit which is propitiated when people first open a new field, and during each subsequent year. After the sacrifice and offering of the chicken the tongue bone is removed. If the bone is whole this is interpreted as a sign that there will be plenty of water. If it is dirty and generally looks decayed it is a sign that there will be no rainfall and that prosperity may be expected. However, if the bone is short, blunt, or deformed there will be little rain and the rice may be expected to die in the fields.³³

³⁰ F. H. Giles, "An Account of the Rites and Ceremonies Observed at Elephant Driving Operations in the Siam," *Journal of the Siam Society*, vol. of Lang-Siam, Southern Siam," *Journal of the Siam Society*, Volume XXV, Pt. 2, July 1932, p. 168. On p. 170 a

simpler version is mentioned.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

³² S. Phang, *Krangkrachet* (compilers), *Propheesil Thai Boraan*, Bangkok: Prae Phithaya, 1962, pp. 749-50.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 755.

Other sacrificial customs for this region can be found in the already mentioned rituals observed by Gules. Before the yearly hunt for the great catfish in the Mekhong River, an intricate set of preliminary rituals is said to take place. One of the sports to be performed received offerings of betel nuts and betel leaves, woven leaf fans, flowers, bracelets, earrings, sweetmeats and, once or twice, fowls. Another would last for a year in success in receiving one pig and, in the third year, a buffalo. The animal would be divided up and the head, throat and tail would be offered in a silver. Afterwards nine separate dishes would be offered and a medium would communicate to the people the spirits' preference so that the catch would turn out that year. Another spirit would receive pork, duck and fowls flesh.³⁹ In a different hunting ritual described for the region, the medium was consulted, but the likelihood of getting a lack was determined with the help of a good omen. A bile egg was pecked at and examined carefully. If the yolk was visible through the egg white at any place, it was taken as a favourable sign.⁴⁰

The Laotians

Northeast Laos, its strong Buddhist tradition state sponsored blood sacrifices and a many rituals of Lanna ceremonial history. For example, it is recorded in the annals that the founder of the Lanna kingdom performed a sacrifice which must have been quite significant in which he offered as many as thirty-six buffaloes.⁴¹ The annual *phra* (many spirit) sarnes (*phra*) were celebrated and each year, at the provincial level, the priest caretaker used to receive from the government a certain sum of money to help organise the communal sacrifice. The state also set a day for the ritual, namely the eighth day of the waxing moon of the seventh month, a day which usually fell in June. This custom apparently financed the sacrifices from state funds stopped in 1918, but even after that time many state officials would help defray the costs of some of these rituals.⁴²

In the Siamese case where the *phra* cults apparently have lost most of their sacrificial character, Bhabhani has not been able to change Lanna *phra* rituals in such a manner so as to take away their sacrificial nature.⁴³ Fortunately for the purpose of this study, there have been some detailed descriptions of the famed blood sacrifices which have been made fairly recently. Here the outline of three of these ceremonies will be presented so as to enable

³⁹ F. H. Giles, "An Account of the Ceremonies and Rites Performed when Catching the Pla Buk, a Species of Catfish Inhabiting the Waters of the River Me Khong, the Northern and Eastern Frontier of Siam," *Journal of the Siam Society*, Volume XXVIII, Pt. 2, 1935, pp. 91-111.

⁴⁰ F. H. Giles, "An Account of the Hunting of the Wild Ox on Horse Back in the Provinces of Udon Rajadhan and Kalasandhu, and the Rites and Ceremonies which have to be Observed", *Journal of the Siam Society*, Volume XXVII, Pt. 1, 1934, p. 57.

⁴¹ P. Lefèvre-Pontalis, *Notes sur des*

amulettes siamoises, pp. 34-35. Cf. C. Archambault, "Les annales de l'ancien royaume de Sieng Khwang", *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient*, Volume LIII, Part 2, 1966, p. 606.

⁴² Chao Kham Man Vongkot Rattana, "Les rites du culte des *phra* au ho vang-na à Luang-Prabang", p. 97.

⁴³ Regarding the strength of the Laotian *phra* cults, and their fairly harmonious symbiosis with Buddhism, see, for example, G. Condominas, "Notes sur le Bouddhisme populaire en milieu rural lao", *Bulletin des Amis du Royaume Lao*, Volume 9, 1973, pp. 96-97.

the nature of seasonal details which are so important in comparative ethnology, as well as the use of the masks and their ritual as part of the ritual. First and foremost in Prabang, then then a hybrid of the two, the masks are used in the ritual.

In Luang Prabang the masks which have been described in detail take place every year in the fifth month of the year which usually is in May before the arrival of the rainy season. The masks are the recipients of the offerings and are known as *devata luong* Nua and *devata luong* Nua. These are the spirits of the mountains and also the spirits of the mountains who are said to be present at their shrine. These masks are exposed once to the public at the traditional New Year which also in the April and in the twelfth month at the end of the rainy season. At the end of the last of the masks was a ceremony also held in Nong Kham where at the second end of the nineteenth century the masks were exposed. When these masks are exposed they are held in a ritual. In October 2, 1955 I have seen a mask which is the last of the masks. It is an extremely mask. This is the last of the masks which is quite striking for the masks and black faces have eyes and open mouth with masses of hair. In the way of the mask the mask has a face which is very different. During the ritual for the Phum Mueang of Luang Prabang in May at an early stage of the ceremony six large signs are placed around the altar. A black horse piglet donated by the community is taken and killed. The blood is collected, the hair removed and then the animal is cut into pieces and boiled together with four hens which are also collected to the great spirit. The pig's liver and stomach are cleaned and are dropped in the big pot with boiling meat. The intestines after rubbing and cleaning are boiled above a fire. Meanwhile the altar is prepared. A pole about two metres tall which is called the *lak lan* or "acrobatic post" is erected. On top of this pole a *laka* is fastened and halfway down a ring is attached. From this ring two chains are hung. One consists of five small bars fastened together like rings of a rope ladder the other made of five rings fastened together. These chains are called the *chan* and *chan* chain of the horses. At the foot of this pole a tray holding two containers filled with rice balls is placed and in each of these containers two reeds are stuck like in rice wine containers. The reeds are connected with chains to the post. At the appropriate place two mattresses and pillows are arranged. On the floor a mat is laid out and above this resting place a white cloth with a red border is hung. A coconut and a pitcher of water are given by way of preliminary offerings. Near by are a tray with six small cups, a drink, betel chewing equipment, a trumpet

¹⁴ The following paragraphs are based upon the painstaking reporting by C. Arcambault in his article "Le lang du ho devata luong & Luong Prabang", *Bulletin de la Société des Études Indochinoises*, NS Volume XLVI, 1971, No. 2, pp. 215-85.

¹⁵ C. Arcambault, *Structures religieuses laos (rites et mythes)*, Vientiane: Vithagnu 1973, pp. 20-62, and his "Le lang du ho

devata luong & Luong Prabang", p. 218. The same masks, described as "grimacing devils with horrible fangs, enormous ears and a tangled mane reaching the ground" are used by the agglomeration of ethnic groups in Vietnam known as the Mui. See H. Baudesson, *Indo-China and its Primitive People* (translated by E. Appleby H. B.), London: Hutchinson, n.d., pp. 190-9.

six bananas and two hard-boiled eggs. At some distance from the mattresses a bowl with pork, grilled viscera and a bowl of blood, as well as the four boiled chickens are also placed. At the same time, the spirit mediums are also presents to some minor spirits, consisting of coconuts and sweets. Sugary gifts are also presented to the ancestral couple Nyeu. At the place reserved for (Grand) Mother Nyeu, two chickens are killed and the blood reserved. The drum is sounded and alcohol is offered to the spirits. The ritual meal is brought over to a spot near the pillows. At this stage the male medium who has been sitting next to the priest, shows signs of spirit possession and he is dressed in the clothes which have been brought especially for this purpose. A crown of flowers is placed on the head. When the spirit has descended into the medium, food and drink is presented to him and cotton strands which are around the alcohol containers are blessed by him. The priest then, in a deferring manner asks about the prospects for the community, whether there will be epidemics, whether the rains will be abundant and whether there is a danger of crop failure. Then, via the medium telling, on the occasion here described that, if the spirits are properly feasted, good prospects may be expected. A ritual dance is held in front of the medium in order to please the spirit and soon afterwards the spirit suddenly leaves him to the accompaniment of a bamboo drum as he dresses. One by one, in a fixed order, other great spirits take his place and each of these has as a string to a traditional dance. The spirit will, one performing a sabre dance, another soberly remaining seated. There is more opportunity for questions and answers. The spirits are then moved forward for advice regarding private problems. This concludes this stage of the ceremony which has lasted for some time. In the afternoon, the next day is observed as one during which no work may be done (in Laotian *kham tan*). In the evening a rattan cable is produced, the medium again falls into a trance, and in front of the shrine for the ancestors Nyeu a ritual rope-pulling takes place. There are two camps: males at the head of the rope and females at the tail end. It is important that the female side wins, else the country will know no peace.

The buffalo sacrifice in Vientiane takes place some time during May or June, at the beginning of the rainy season, at a Vietnamese temple which has been built on the site of a shrine, called *ho nid*, not far from where the old city pillar (*thak me*) once stood. The sacrifice is performed in the wet air of the whole moon and when the sacrifice was made, this was still half-recessed by the authorities. Several representatives of rank contribute financially and some of them attend the performance. A table of offerings is prepared with a mat and some cushions at the foot. A small mast is erected with a flag on top and by the mast a copper vessel and a third pitcher filled with alcohol at the base. Also there are a copper gong, a drum,

*C. Archambault, "Le liang du ho devata luong à Luong Prabang", p. 246.

"These details and other information on the Vientiane ritual are taken from P. Levi, "The Sacrifice of the Buffalo and the Forecast of the Weather in Vientiane", *Kingdom of Laos* (edited by R. de Bernal), Saigon: France Asie, 1959, pp. 162-73.

This sacrifice was performed every year before the transplantation of rice. Every three years another buffalo sacrifice was performed at the That Luang for the "desacralisation of the earth". See C. Archambault, "Le sacrifice du buffle à l'autel du That Luang (Wiang-Chan), *Ethnos*, Volume 40, 1975, pp. 114-49.

sabres and a metal tray with rice and drinks set out on a flower table. South behind the Vatsavay female medium the sacrificer has laid a table with six stools. This is for the spirit of the buffalo used to be killed at the shrine a few days before the mother of the sacrificer comes. A female spirit is possessed by a *phu* and in the company of the *phu* she executes a few steps of a traditional dance. At the end of the dance she orders the buffalo to be killed. After in some half hour a sacrifice has been made at the foot of the big tree close by the altar a spirit is sent on the road, then on the neck. The buffalo is now cut into pieces. Heads and feet are carried to a nearby shrine containing a sacred stone which later will be used for divination. The rest of the body is arranged near the table. Most of the meat is cooked and served to the mediums and this will be eaten by the medium. The spirit possessed medium is kept in the shrine and early in the afternoon the sacrificer looks at his calendar for possible future events. At about two o'clock the buffalo is divided. Large shares go to the medium and the sacrificer who serves the rice. Head and tail will form part of the sacrifice which will be divided between her and the spirits. At around a quarter of five the person of persons proceed to the shrine which has the sacred stone. Offerings are made to the spirit of the stone. The medium takes three times around the stone and then rises it with water from a leafy. Immediately afterwards experts rush forward. They lift the stone turn it around, and scan the bottom surface. Special attention is given to notches which areas of the under surface have become wet and which remained dry for the stone may be read as a map of the region. In this manner it can be stated which groups of villages stand a good chance of plentiful water and which must prepare for relatively little during the coming season. A further expert is called to see whether good or bad rains can be expected. Sabres are dipped into rice wine containers and pulled out again. If on the underside of the blades there will be plentiful rain, if much remains clinging to the metal, rain will be withheld.

The buffalo sacrifice at Va Phai in southern Laos occurs on the fourth day of the waxing moon in the sixth La-tan month, which usually falls in May⁴⁸. Republic of Laos an ancient custom going back to a time long ago when the king sacrificed a two human beings. The buffalo is a substitute for the humans with which the spirits will have to be satisfied. Before the shrine two parasols shade the place where the invisible servants of the great spirits will receive the offering. Beside the shrine an elephant post is erected. Its purpose is to enable the chief spirits to tether their heavenly mounts. As soon as the chief priest, the medium and their assistants have arrived candles are lit on the altar on the elephant post and on the central beam of the shrine itself. Mats and pillows are laid out as a welcoming gesture to the *phu*. The gongs and drums are sounded whilst the medium establishes contact with the unseen spirits by throwing three pinches of rice to a hawk. As soon as a *phu* has entered his body the sacrificer behaves in the fashion proper for the particular spirit that has appeared. A female medium also becomes possessed. A sabre is then pulled out. One by one spirits descend and disappear to make way for new ones. At

⁴⁸ These dates have been taken from B. H. H. at Va Phai, *Kingdom of Laos*, C. Archambault, "The Sacrifice of the" pp. 156-63.

the direction of the branches is sinistral and a bending inverse to that of the branches speaks disaster. In the light of the findings amongst the Assamese Tai, there is yet a ritual act which ought to be reported. This concerns the shrine of Grandfather Muei at Luang Prabang which receives special attention once a year in connection with rituals around the city shrine (*thut*). At that time there is a ritual purification of the Grandfather Muei shrine. Once every three years during the seventh month (June) there is used the sacred dog sacrifice. This red dog was given the name of "golden deer". No further acts are available in Grandfather Muei other than that he was so let us call him, of the earth (Kao Dong) and that he was considered the ancestor of the Kha aborigines²³. There is yet another report regarding a dog sacrifice this time for a female Kha spirit and also there the dog flesh is also known as "golden deer".²⁴

The Tai Neua

There is a short account of the annual great communal sacrifice of the Tai Neua. This is celebrated in honour of the tutelary spirit of the village and the region (Pai Sant) which is identified with the spirit of a chief who has recently died. On this occasion the guardian spirits of the *naucang* are also honoured. Just outside the village is the place of the sacred grove of the village and nearby this grove there is a permanent shrine in stilts. After the village headman has been elected for the sacrifice this shrine is repaired and all inhabitants share in the cost of buying a buffalo. Over all paths leading to the village a thread is strung with a nettle attached, stating during which days the community will be closed; strangers will not be allowed in nor will those from the village be allowed to go out.

The buffalo is killed in front of the shrine and skinned; the animal is divided up. The meat is placed in copper bowls and cooked. All parts, including the skin, will be consumed. On small, flat plates small amounts of the different parts of the buffalo will be put and presented to the spirits. There will be a bit of meat, some liver, heart, lung, intestines. The headman will present these parts of the buffalo to the spirits with alcohol drinks, first to the main spirits and then to the lesser rank. Each of these lesser ranking spirits receives an offering suitable to its taste. One may receive a goat, another a pig, one a wass is presented a hen and another a duck. The sacrificial gifts are left in baskets for some time so as to give the spirits a chance to accept them; then the community's members consume the meats and drinks. Some of the meat will be sent to neighbouring communities whose members could not attend. These rituals are solemnly performed on last three days. Amongst the ritual beliefs, rains are mentioned.

Apart from this great communal festival Boret mentions also domestic sacrifices prescribed by the effect of the house during which a few fowls may be killed and offered to the ancestors.²⁵ Commonly used methods of

²³ C. Archambault, *La course de pirguet*, p. 48.

²⁴ C. Archambault, "Une cérémonie en l'honneur des génies de la mine de sel de Ban Bo (Moyen Laos)", in *Structures religieuses lao*, p. 10.

²⁵ R. Pascal, "Notes sur les rites de

possession observés à Dong Dok (Vientiane, 1971)", *Bulletin des Amis du Royaume Lao*, Volume 6, 1971, p. 213.

²⁶ A. Bouriet, "Les Thây", *Anthropos*, Volume 2, 1907, pp. 625-7.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 362-63.

The Red Tai

Every year, during the New Year festival, the Red Tai sacrifice a buffalo or a pig to the spirits. He prepares a large tray of twelve small cups and twelve small candles. Place an incense burner in the middle of the tray. The spirits of the ancestors are invited to the sacrifice and are offered a bowl of rice. They are presented with a bowl of wine. The Phi Maeng (the spirit of the rice) is also invited to the sacrifice. The spirit of the rice is the spirit of the rice fields.⁶²

Miss de Roberts's account is devoted to the magical and magical healing practices. There are by no means a very large set of customs, with what becomes of them in a critical comparative analysis, but this account is a valuable supplement to the book. Yet there are a few ritual details in the account of Red Tai rituals which are worthy of present enquiry. Among the Red Tai there is a class of healers who rely upon spirit mediums for their effectiveness and maintain contact by offering animal products and themselves to fall into a trance. These practitioners of a lay magic are assisted by a number of cups, a quantity of rice, and a bowl of wine. The cups are placed with its point upwards, a wax incense burner is placed in the middle which is surrounded by smaller incense burners. The tray is made of wood and some cotton thread is woven as a 'crashnet' made of wax a few silver bracelets and a few silver rings are placed on the tray. The number of cups and small candles may be four, six, or twelve, the latter being reserved for the more important occasions. Ten or twenty trays are used and a meat offering must be given. On the occasion of a wedding, whereby a 'tray of twelve' (*khao x p x m*) with twelve cups and twelve candles is given, a buffalo may be sacrificed.⁶³

On every three years a priesting medium healer must give a large feast for his maintenance in the spirit world and on this occasion he invites his colleagues. This ceremony is quite distinct from the communal ritual described above, in that it is entirely the deals aspects of the Red Tai pantheon are revealed. The inhabitants of his village (his patients) help with the preparation. In the middle of the ceremony a large bamboo mast is set up from which a net made of wood and thread, such as flowers, miniature boats, crabs and birds are hung. There also is a 'tray of twelve' and a pig sacrifice. During the opening a forest the spirits of the ancestors, the guardian spirits of village and mountain, those of the mountains, forests, fields, and animals are invited to attend. The great heavenly spirit descends in their image, horses and elephants and express their wishes with the help of various mediums in trance. These mediums are healers. They are invited to work and to fall into a trance. The healers are invited to work and to fall into a trance. The healing techniques are described in the account of the ceremony and it is to be noted that the priesting medium is the one who carries the pig sacrifice to the most important god, Father Phou. In what follows the negotiations

⁶² R. Robert, *Notes sur les Tay Dang de Lung Chanh (Thanh-hoa-Annam)*, Institut Indochinois pour l'Etude de l'Homme, Mémoire No. 1, Hanoi: Imprimerie d'Extrême-Orient, 1941, p. 80.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

with the various powers for a promise of continued support for the Test, so that the latter may continue his medical practice.⁶¹

Amongst the various Red Tai east, as two divination techniques have been encountered. The first one consists of placing an egg vertically in a bowl of rice and throwing some of the rice over the egg, predicting by the hand whether one or two grains will remain on top. The other which is used before going out hunting, consists of examining a sacrificed fowl's right foot. The diviner looks for the position of the 'blood point'. If it lies at one of the joints it bodes evil, but if it lies under a fleshy part it indicates success. The place where the 'blood point' can be found indicates also what type of game will be shot. A final item of interest for this research is the information that a traditional path of the Red Tai may involve the drinking of chicken's blood mixed with alcohol.⁶²

The Chuang

In some ancient Chinese notes about the Chuang it has been reported that these practise fowl divination, which they possess eighteen types. Bamboo rods which are straight and close to the chicken bone predict good fortune but those which are curved and far from the bone indicate bad luck. There is little doubt that this constitutes a somewhat garbled account of the technique of pushing a vers of bamboo in small holes in fowls' thigh bones described in Chapter 3. In addition it is mentioned that during the making of an alliance wine and meat are offered and sometimes a dog may be killed.⁶³

The Nhang

A single source provides a vague glimpse into customs amongst the Nhang which may be related to those already noted above. Abadie reports that certain Nhang villages have garrison spirits in whose honour grand ceremonies are organised at various times. These feasts last from three to six days depending upon the festival and during the celebrations the villagers are not allowed to leave their village. The rituals consist of offerings and feasts. The village is a prohibited terrain for strangers, and all access roads carry warnings stating until when it is closed.⁶⁴

For other eastern groups only a few vague reports have thus far been encountered which indicate that these also have a sacrificial tradition. Thus, the Thai in China sacrifice fowls and pigs and they worship chiefly at unroofed shrines at spots considered sacred.⁶⁵ The Chang Chai perform offerings in front of trees, which they believe to be 'spirit trees'.⁶⁶ Such remarks clearly fit in with what has been observed for other Tai groups. They also indicate the need for detailed ethnographic reports.

⁶¹ For further details, see pp. 73-75.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁶³ Johnson Ling, *Recherches ethnographiques sur la race Yao dans l'Asie du Sud-est*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1929, p. 109.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

⁶⁵ M. Abadie, *Les races du Haut Tonkin de Phung-tho à Lang-son* (Paris: Société d'Etudes Géographiques, Marines et Coloniales, 1924), p. 91.

⁶⁶ W. C. Fiddell, *The Tai Race*, p. 149.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

whereby a coffin with the corpse of a famous Bodhist monk is placed and then the cremation proceeds. The ritual is the same as even more widespread among the La. Apart from the two cases mentioned above whereby the Tai-Lachha attached themselves to the La, they are sometimes held as a separate ritual (Phakso) or often they are attached to the New Year celebrations themselves. In all these cases the tug-of-war is held between a men's and a women's team, and as such it is considered a good omen when the women's team wins. There is no doubt that the tug-of-war ritual is essentially a ceremony for obtaining rain.²³ When they are combined with Pui-Maing sacrifices these tugs-of-war seem to underline the seasonal character of the ceremony. In this case it could be regarded as an extension of the cremation and questing techniques in order to decide over whether the rains will be good. By letting the women win the game of tug-of-war the chances of part A rains are improved.

The general character of the communal sacrifices may thus be described as a joint effort to make contact with the men's guardian spirit and other members of the La pantheon to present these spirits with some of their favourite foods and drinks and to persuade them to do their best and let the season be good. After these offerings and when the priests have been examined the sacrifices are thought of as having the gods pleased. The farmers have at least some idea of what to expect. Since the beginning of the monsoon is a critical time in the yearly cycle of work, this ceremony has assumed the character of an annual ritual, albeit, an occasional overriding phenomenon in the traditional religious cycle. Even in regions where La farmers, under influence of new developments, are in the process of abandoning the sacrifice they will take it up again in a year when the rains are exceptionally dry. In other cases the sacrifices have been continued also because many La fear that the gods may deeply resent being suddenly deprived of gifts to which they have become accustomed. Any calamity which would occur in a village where recently the sacrifice has been stopped would be interpreted as the result of the gods' wrath.

What there is no doubt about is that the late season communal sacrifice is intimately connected with the influence of the monsoon. This does not account for the few cases where a seasonal sacrifice is held later in the year. It has probably to be mentioned that at least for the rituals in Laos, Archaimbault has stated the opinion that these may be the last of the first sacrifices, at least when seen from the perspective of the heat festival. The rituals in April, May and June help in the rising of the waters in all ponds and rivers, and the September, October or November sacrifice is intended to make the waters withdraw and to prepare for the harvest. A similar account has been reported for the White La of Lai Chap. It is a neat interpretation which may reflect the thinking of some La and White Tai ritual specialists, yet it is not in touch with Laohere. A similar, quite logical picture could be set up by 'explaining' that the first set of rituals

²³ Three researchers who have given thought on the tug-of-war between the tugs-war and rain-making are Luk-witz, in "Notes about the Tai", p. 89, Archaimbault, in "La liang du ho devata luong à

Long Prabang", p. 248, and S. Pong-Meets, *Laotian sur le plateau indochinois*, his *Contemporains*, Volume I, Paris: Mouton, 1962, pp. 76-77.

sacrifices which are here analysed are intended for the whole community. For the duration of the ceremony the village becomes a sacred precinct and its holiest place just next to where the people live becomes the proper place where pigs may be received. That is why pig-sacrificers spend as much labour in the fields and skinning and tanning in the houses as they do in taking place. I doubtless may later find what is meant by the Assamese *la* concept *kam* which serves to indicate the state of sanctification is essentially related to the *la* and *Sam* concepts and is used for of late separation. Two different methods have been described for indicating the end of a word that the community is in such a state of isolation. One is the use of white cotton thread strung over the entrance to a house together with a written message attached stating the duration of the prohibition. A second of this method consists of the total enclosure of a community with such a thread (*Khamyang*). A second way consists of the use of a symbol usually called *la-ye*. This symbol is made of a small white cloth. The people (Shan, Lolo, Yunnan, Siam, Laos, and Kachin) have used this symbol at a fairly early time in their history. However, the symbol is the use of this symbol does not seem to indicate any of the urban stages or even of Tai

Finally there are two accounts. Khamvane and Lue of a strict prohibition on women to attend the community's most sacred ritual. It has been indicated that the Khamvane may have forbidden this aspect relatively recently as a result of events that took place after the 1960s in their region. As for the Lue there is no information whatsoever about the enforcement of the prohibition. In theory a case could be built up in showing that the Khamvane and the Lue represent minority ethnic groups in the north of the general extension of women. If that be the case it could be argued that in the Yuan region it is not considered proper for women to stand on the platform which makes up the altar for the celebration of the general festival, as there is a strong tradition of keeping women from any sacred charged site.¹⁰ In La it has been reported that unless they have some ritual to perform, women ought not to be in the sacred site of the tribal deities Nya. However it would be tedious to present this as a general statement, as pointing out that there are many La groups especially ethnic La of the traditional groups, whereby no such prohibitions are found and women are by no means barred from attending the community's most sacred rituals. In La it has also been noted that women are not barred from the shrine during other rituals. All either the evidence reveals that the Khamvane and Lue form the extreme cases. It is quite possible that some of the exclusion is the result of the influence of Buddhism, a creed which is rather male oriented.

b) Human sacrifices

In the overview there are several elements. If a people among the humans. Two groups (Abel and Cain) are to have to labor humans amongst the offerings during a ritual festival. This may well represent a real extension of the general fact of man's labor and his offering of his labor in order to turn them into gifts to the deity for his souls' descent. A large J. Sacr.

Thailand, Scandinavian Institute of Asian

files on or two further afield have been reported for the Shan and the Siamese. The latter is a very common and spread typical of a local development or a rather recent transfer of influence from other cultures. The custom may have been introduced through the stories of the Foundation sacrifices under the reign of Fa Mahanayaka has been reported for the Yuan-tai States and the Lachons. It is unlikely that such pig or sacrifices belonged to the Ayutthaya tradition because in various accounts of rituals and ceremonies for more or less traditional Tai groups there are none describing a sacrifice of a pig with the deity. Finally there are a few accounts of human sacrifice to appease a specific spirit. Every year the Ahom killed a young man in Phim Mac Leat. The Siamese may regularly have sacrificed four young women in order to satisfy a spirit living near a lake and there is a report from southern Laos that formerly the kings sacrificed one male and one female the latter sacrifice being now substituted for this. These three accounts show a common pattern. It has been shown how the Ahom kings did this in the Phim Mac Leat after the model of an older, local cult and under the influence of a specific type of Hinduism. The remaining two cases are rather vague accounts and unsubstantiated. They do not show any similarity to either other with respect to the type of spirit to whom the offering is intended. It is quite possible that such sacrifices did occur but if this were the case the practice seems to represent some isolated developments. Therefore it is not warranted with the information at hand, to include them in the reconstruction of traditional Tai religion.

c) The range of victims

Domestic animals are for the most part chosen to be presented to the gods. It is to be fully expected that for the people for their livestock is easily and readily available. Above all, it comes to mind for a part of the diet of these peoples. After the spirits have accepted their presents, all the fruits, the rice, the sweets and the meats are consumed by those who have come to celebrate the ritual.

The Tai peoples appear to be quite consistent in what they regard as suitable gifts for the unseen powers. During daily rituals one or more fowls or a duck is a proper present. A communal sacrifice requires at least a pig. A buffalo is regarded amongst all Tai as the best gift which is most pleasing to the gods. During a large community offer, when a differentiation is made between various recipients it is found that the great heavenly powers share one or more buffaloes and various other categories of powers obtain goats, pigs, fowls, ducks, pigeons and fowls. The range of animals considered suitable for sacrifice was even further extended in two instances, namely in the Ayutthaya case for cholera and elephant diseases, where brown swans, a cobra, deer, fish, rat, frog and earthworms are mentioned, and in the Siamese tradition for which bull, crabs, horse, sea crabs and a bamboo rat are cited. These cases of special prescriptions must be regarded as belonging to a very specialized process or ritual. They do not appear to be shared by the general populace.

Day sacrifices were a special position in Tai ritual and they deserve further attention. In the Chong-chai ceremony there were seven separate occasions on which cows were killed and to these seven an eighth can be

still added. The Ahom give white dogs in the "fourth" section of *im nira*, and on a different occasion during the former state ceremony for Lai Lung Kham, a power closely connected with disease, they killed a red dog. The third case occurs amongst the Phakey who sacrificed and ate a red dog in case there was an epidemic which showed no signs of abating. The fourth are the Nea, who throw a dog into the fire which threatens to consume the village. The fifth is a red dog offer by the Lai for Grandfather Mien. One of the spirits in the Nea pantheon is provided with a dog during the great annual sacrifice. The Chuang kill a dog at an oath-taking sacrifice. Finally, amongst the Red Tai healing rituals there is the killing of a dog for Phi Khong who is asked to intervene with the evil disease-causing spirits on behalf of the patient.⁷⁷ From all these separate cases it appears that there is a widespread pattern which may go back to Ancient Tai ritual. This concerns the relation between a dog sacrifice and the warding off of threats.

On one of the occasions when a colour is prescribed the white colour is considered best, but in four cases this colour is specified as red. It is possible that the preference for red reflects simply the fact that Southeast Asian peoples often have a reddish diet and that in traditional Tai villages, eating a black or a white dog might prove rather difficult. On the other hand it is also possible that this red colour is, in some oblique fashion, related to the fact that a dog sacrifice is ritually known in Laos as the sacrifice of a "golden deer". Also amongst the Yuan there is an ancient mystical connection between dog and "golden deer".⁷⁸ The traces of the red colour can not be further pursued with the little amount of information at hand and it will be taken up again after the information from surrounding cultures has been surveyed.

d) Divination techniques

A variety of divination practices have been encountered when studying the link between the ceremonial sacrifices and the behaviour of the rainy season. Some of these practices have been encountered for Tai groups which have not recently been in contact, though the geographical spread is not as wide as to strongly suggest an Ancient Tai custom. These are the custom of examining the animal's liver for any tears or discolouration which may bode ill (Ahom, Khmuyang and Laotians) and the examination of the position of a fowl's tongue inside (Ahom, Siamese, Tai of northeast Thailand and Laotians). Another interesting combination is the account of fowls' thigh bone divination amongst the Ahom and the report on a similar custom for the Chuang.

Less widespread are the reports on taking the direction in which a sacrificial animal falls or the direction of the blood flow as indicative of how the coming season will be (Lue and Laotians). Similarly, the number of grains which regenerate in an egg (Nea and Red Tai) have only been found thus far for peoples who have had opportunity to borrow and learn from each other. Other divination practices, such as seeing whether the yolk is visible through the egg white (Tai of northeast Thailand), the pouring of water over a holy stone (Lao), the dipping of swords in water (Lao) and the

⁷⁷ R. Robert, *Notes sur les Tay Dong*, pp. 71.

⁷⁸ C. Notton, *Annales du Siam*, Volume I, pp. 3-10.

examination of a few's food (Red Tai) represent not only instances and an impression the accounts are found for a range of other peoples may be supposed that they represent either local developments, or possibly relatively recent borrowings with a neighbouring culture.

e) Oaths of allegiance

An interesting sub-issue which emerged from the ethnographic survey is the description of some oath-taking rituals. An informant dipped their swords in chicken's blood and drank some of it whilst swearing a truce with a neighbouring tribe. The Yien king swearing allegiance drank buffalo blood mixed with alcohol. The Red Tai who makes a formal oath may have to drink chicken's blood mixed with alcohol. The Chuang drink alcohol and eat meat on such occasions. In most of these instances there seems sufficient similarity to recognise a shared tradition. Since the geographical spread of the reported customs is extremely wide, it may well offer itself for inclusion in the Ancient Tai tradition. A further study of this material, considering details such as the actual texts of the oaths may throw further light on this matter. In that case it would be interesting to include the Samese custom of swearing oaths reported in some of the earlier inscriptions, as well as the custom of the Chiang Mai drinking of the water of the "cup of allegiance" which was regularly performed in Siam until the nineteenth century¹⁰. The fact that the custom existed that water be drunk on such an occasion may possibly be related to an Ancient Tai custom of drinking blood and alcohol.

In this chapter various aspects of a common cultural tradition which appears to go back to the time when the Tai had a more homogeneous culture have been established. This does not mean that such aspects must be regarded as uniquely Tai. This may or may not be the case. Before an opinion may be ventured on whether the Tai share some of the Ancient Tai traditions with other people the ethnographic survey must be extended to include the main surrounding cultures. This is the subject of the following chapter.

¹⁰ H. G. O. Walter, *Siamese State Customs*, B. Quaritch, 1931, pp. 191-98.
 names, *Their History and Function*, London.

TAI SACRIFICES IN WIDER PERSPECTIVE

The study of sacrificial traditions of all the peoples who surround the Tai, and with whom they may have interacted at various periods in history is an immense task. The Tai are spread widely, from Assam to northern Vietnam and from southern China to southern Thailand. The cultural traditions, with which at least some of the Tai groups have been in contact, cover scores of ethnic groups in Assam, in Burma, in southern China, in northern Thailand, in Laos, in Vietnam and in Cambodia. To give an adequate and fairly complete overview of sacrificial rituals in all these surrounding cultures would involve the king's acres in scores of languages and take years of research in each of the countries mentioned above. All that can be done in the present limited time and with the finite resources available is the scanning of accessible literature and the collecting of information regarding the general types of sacrifices common in the various traditions, as well as noting interesting ritual details which may provide clues as to whether or not Tai customs are related. In this overview of ethnographic literature occasionally valuable descriptions of sacrifices were encountered which have not been incorporated in this volume. Usually these related to local healing rituals or death ceremonies and they were excluded on the grounds that they were not directly relevant to the main themes of this part of the book. In general, the following account has been guided by the Tai sacrificial customs which have been already established above. For the various surrounding cultures, note is taken of which animals are killed, which rules are observed during the communal sacrifices, and what divination techniques have been reported. In accordance with the pattern set in Volume I, the survey begins in the west and ends in Cambodia.

a) Assamese lowland peoples

Assamese cultural history is extremely complex. Many different peoples have entered the Brahmaputra Valley and interacted with the cultural groups preceding them. In the lowlands especially, the mixing of a variety of indigenous traditions with various forms of Hinduism has occurred to such an extent that it is difficult to discern the separate strands of beliefs. The Muri, Dapha, Boro, Meeh, Koch, Domasi, Garo and Chutiya cultures are some of the important local groupings, but only a few of these have been described in some detail. The situation in the hills is somewhat different. There many traditions appear to have been able to maintain to a much larger extent their own specific character. Therefore the intricate Assamese scene will be dealt with by first noting sacrificial customs in the lowlands, and then moving to the hills.

Apart from the Chutiya human sacrifices in honour of Pishari which have been mentioned in some detail in Chapter 3, there is an account of a ritual human decapitation at Dibrugarh, in what used to be Koch territory. There were two rows of thirty round pitars and two rows of square ones.

Each pitar is supposed to have been the appointed seat of a grandee according to his rank. It is said that every year, on a fixed day, all

the nobles assembled on the hill and a woman who was decorated with garlands and a crown, carrying a bowl of honey, the assembly, as a sacrifice to appease the wrath of the Deity.³ No other interpretation on the sacrificial nature of nobles has been found. Neither the shape of the pillars nor the carvings as they are to be seen in the illustration in Butler's book seem to bear a relationship with the culture.

Sacrifices accompany all Garo ceremonies. These comprise rituals for the welfare of the community as well as for propitiating an angry deity and appeasing an angry recurring deity. Sacrifices include pigs, chickens and agricultural rituals. The animals sacrificed as sacrificial animals are goats and fowls.⁴ Such information brings this study a further step than providing the insight that at least some Assamese peoples other than the Tai had a strongly developed sacrificial tradition even though the Assamese, when they first settled in the Brahmaputra Valley, must have differed so strikingly different in this respect.

Probably more important for the cultural historian is the possible influence of Hinduism as seen in the westernmost Tai. For the most part, Hindu events are related to the Hindu faith and its rituals. There are several branches of Hinduism with which sacrifices are connected. Besides pigs, goats and chickens may be used to sacrifice to the deity, renunciation and of treasure of the deity. All this, however, is to be done with a white cow, the white cow is to be stained with blood and offered to the deity must be a cow with black, flowers presented to them must be red.⁵

In general, however, the ritual of most Hindus are related to the sacrifice. Brahmin priests are forbidden to kill unless permitted to do so. The rare victim is a sacrifice. Only four types of victims may be offered according to texts which prohibit a sacrifice to the deity, namely, a cow, a deer and a man.⁶ Of these, the horse sacrifice has been most often described. The victim must be in his prime, perfect proportion and must even be a male. If it concerns a human sacrifice, the victim must also be a male. In one description of a human sacrifice, the victim must be a man, a woman, a child or a girl. It is killed by two or three men, and the ritual is a garland. *Widows* are offered constantly these are intended to kill the victim. This process is also followed by beating and wailing. Along the victim, they wail and shout and shout and shout. When death has ensued, the victim is removed and the body is cut up. The rest is skinned and is kept into pieces. One part is given to the fire, others

³ J. Butler, *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam During a Residence of Fourteen Years*, Delhi: Vivek Publishing Company, 1978, p. 26.

⁴ B. Pugh, "The Garos", *Tribes of Assam* (edited by S. Barkakasi), New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1960, pp. 27-28.

⁵ J. A. Dubois, *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*, p. 645.

⁶ W. Crooke, *The Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India*, Westminster: Constable, 1896, Volume II, p. 312. Crooke mentions that cow sacrifices were common until they were prohibited by the Hindus.

⁷ There are some accounts of human sacrifice other than *yajnam*. In a type of gruesome alchemy, accounts of which are also related in Upper Assam, the first-born son's blood ought to be used in a ceremony reputedly bringing spectacular wealth and power to the sacrificer. This has actually been tried, see *The Indian Antiquary*, Volume II, 1871, pp. 125-26.

⁸ Dubois (p. 511) mentions that the horse must be perfectly white, but his editor thinks Dubois is mistaken and it should be black.

fired in bitter and noisy accompaniment of pipes and the person who pays for the ceremony is the only one who is seated. The pipes are played over the crowd and the person who is seated is the only one who is seated by himself on the left side of the crowd.

From these accounts it is clear that the sacrifice is a very ancient and very important ceremony. It is a sacrifice to the gods and the ancestors of the community. The sacrifice is performed in a very solemn and dignified manner. The sacrifice is a very important ceremony in the life of the community. The sacrifice is a very important ceremony in the life of the community. Essentially both those Aham rituals have retained their Tat character, however.

b) Assamese hill peoples

A striking ritual tradition has been reported for the Khasi people. In the last place, some Khasi regularly performed ritual killing of humans. Some of these apparently were under the influence of Tantric beliefs and practices, such as the sacrifices at Jaintia, where each autumn humans were killed and thrown in the river for the Kapi goddess, and at Nartang where a severed head was thrown down into an underground cave.¹ There is also a well described tradition of killing humans for the *thlen*, a water demon living in a cave. *Thlen* worship regularly is passed on in certain families and the offering of blood to the *thlen* involves extensive (as yet undescribed) rituals. If the *thlen* does not obtain its regular sustenance in the form of human blood, it will punish itself usually as a snake. Taking human blood, *thlen* was reported to make some hair or cloth from a victim and, with the help of sorcery, the victim would lose weight, grow sick, and finally die. Apparently this is a type of organised witchcraft. Annually the *thlen* is fed (*thlen* *thlen* *thlen*) in an elaborate ceremony, but the sequence of events and its significance, the ritual details have not yet been described.²

Of the Khasi ritual sacrifices, that of the male goat is the most important. Great numbers of these are killed during state ceremonies, such as a coronation. The priest has knife cremation, the regularly recurring rituals to ensure the state's prosperity and protection and also during family rituals. The cock is the other victim regularly killed. During a coronation for example, thirteen he goats are killed, twelve for the twelve main clans and one for the new ruler himself. During their preparation the goats have their horns decorated with silver ornaments. The sacrifice is done with a knife, which has its blade smeared with rice probably in a wish to diminish the threatening character of the tip of the weapon.³ The actual killing is performed in total silence and during the solemnity of the moment.⁴ At other times during the ritual, pipes are beaten, pipes are played and guns are discharged. During the rituals for protection the state goats are killed on a platform which has been pasted with red soil.

An important ritual element in Khasi sacrificial customs is the Khasi oak, of which the branches and leaves are used. There are yearly

¹ J. A. Forbes, *Hindu Manner Customs and Beliefs*, 1776, pp. 99-100 and *Ceremonies*, p. 510 ff.

² B. Pugh, "Khasi", *Tribes of Assam*,

³ H. Barch, *The History and Culture of* p. 40.

the Khasi People, pp. 356-7.

⁴ P. R. T. Gordon, *The Khasis*, Delhi: *the Khasi People*, pp. 262-63.

and Lhota people cut chips from a stick and interpret the pattern of fallen pieces. An Naga very commonly cut a chicken's throat and put it in a small cavity. The point where the intestines branch into two, the fullness or emptiness, as well as the absence or presence of blood are carefully noted. Another common method is to put a reed-stem in a pot, whilst asking the gods a specific question. The question is repeated and the stick shifts through. The resulting two-barred ends are then 'sown' for signs.²¹ It is noteworthy that none of these methods has been encountered in Tai divination.

On the other hand, there is an interesting parallel between the Naga tale of war and that observed amongst some Tai groups. The Jarokful Naga celebrate as part of their eleven-day agricultural festival in February a ritual rope-pulling game which two teams of women are engaged. Older married women are on one side and young women must be on the other. Sometimes the contest is between women of two clans.²² The fact that both Naga and Tai have the ritual tug-of-war contest illustrates some point of contact but this need not necessarily be a direct cultural contact at some stage of these two peoples' histories. In the first place the details diverge considerably between the two peoples. Secondly, tugs of war in connection with rain and agriculture are reported for many other peoples in Southeast Asia. They are found as far south as Indonesia and as far north as the island of Okinawa in southern Japan.²³ The fact that Tai and Naga know a form of the ritual may be interpreted only as a sign of early links with other Southeast Asian cultures.²⁴

c) The Kachin

An interesting set of customs have been described for the Kachin amongst whom buffalo sacrifices are performed, a very important ceremony. Human sacrifices have not been reported, but is often 'an up'. Usually buffaloes, pigs and fowls are selected for ritual slaughter, and the number varies according to the importance of the occasion. After the ceremony the sacrificial meat is commonly shared between the priest and the members of the household in whose behalf the ritual takes place.²⁵ The great majority of Kachin spirits are considered to be particularly fond of blood and meat and in nearly every ceremony some parts of the sacrificial animal are cooked separately and fed (along with other gifts such as a container of alcoholic beverage) in the name of the spirit that has been addressed. There is a rule that the priest and the person on whose behalf the ritual is held are not allowed to do the actual killing; for this task another person, usually an elderly paternal relative of the household, is engaged. Women are

²¹ J. P. Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, pp. 294-95.

²² M. Horam, *Social and Cultural Life of the Nagas*, p. 42.

²³ See the photograph in H. A. Dittendorfer, 'Oknawa, the Island Rebut', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Volume CVII, Nr 2, p. 280.

²⁴ Further details on Naga customs can be found in T. C. Hodson, *The Naga Tribes*

of Manipur, Delhi: B.R. Publishing, 1974 and J. H. Hutton, *The Sema Nagas*, London: Oxford University Press, 1968.

²⁵ H. J. Wehrli, *Beitrag zur Ethnologie der Chingpaw (Kachin) von Ober-Burma*, Leiden, Brill, 1904, pp. 54-55.

²⁶ T. K. M. Baruah, *The Singphos and Their Religion*, Shillong, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, 1977, p. 96.

bamboo is covered and left there during the night. The next morning the contents are examined and if the grain has not been disturbed it is regarded as a favourable sign.²¹

When there is an epidemic, the spirits, owing the region, including those of the mountains, must be propitiated. These spirits like to be presented with white coloured sacrifices such as a white buffalo or a white owl and the priest must be dressed in white. The sacrifice for warding off an epidemic is held outside the village. A part of the sacrifice is left there. The next morning, they perform the ritual, being taking care to avoid loud noises. For these spirits apparently take pleasure at any sign which may be interpreted as a sign of merriness. The priest then goes into a state of trance and communicates with the owners of the region, asking them to take the disease away.²²

In general the Kachin rituals seem to have little in common with those of the Tai. The few common rituals which have been stated in with the view that the contacts between these ethnic groups must be of relatively recent date.²³

4) The Chin

Chin people sacrifice mithans, on major occasions, and pigs as well as tigers are slaughtered at a few ceremonies.²⁴ All animals to be sacrificed must spend the night before the offering takes place in the pens of the house of sacrifice.²⁵ Great care is taken with regard to the carrying into the sacrificial place the animals, which has to be done by a man who is thoroughly familiar with the many intricate rules. The Chin village has communal sarnes in the fields at which sacrifices are given for the owning of the land once every three, six or nine years. This is connected with the fact that these peoples depend upon an upland rotational agricultural system. The field sarnes are also used just before the cattle are allowed to graze. In addition there is a village sacrificial precinct which is situated in the village itself. This precinct is usually marked by several sacrificial stones on the ground. At the village sarnie there is a banyan tree which has been planted originally by the settlement's founder.²⁶ Skins of sacrificed animals are often hung on the verandah. Another type of Chin aspect of sacrificial ritual is the display of racks of sacrificial posts and forked trees.²⁷

Whilst all these sacrifices are not evidently not related to the tradition described for the Tai, it is interesting to note that the Chin sacrifice a dog (of any sex or colour) in order to ward off evil spirits in the fields. Also a dog may be sacrificed in order to protect a person against sorcery.²⁸

²¹ Baruah, *The Singphos and Their Religion*, p. 27. The corresponding Tai belief is described in B. J. Terwiel, "Leasing from the Gods (Thaland)", *Anthropos*, volume 71, 1976, pp. 262-63.

²² Baruah, *The Singphos and Their Religion*, pp. 110-11.

²³ Lohar (et al.), *Ethnic Groups of Mainland Southeast Asia*, pp. 12-13.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

²⁵ H. N. C. Stevenson, *The Economics of*

the Central Chin Tribes, Bombay: The Times of India Press, 1943, p. 146.

²⁶ F. K. Lehman, *The Structure of Chin Society, a Tribal People of Burma Adapted to a Non-Western Civilization*, Illinois Studies in Anthropology No. 3, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963, p. 176.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

²⁸ Stevenson, *The Economics of the Central Chin Tribes*, p. 34.

e) The Akha

In the ethnographic literature the general principles of Akha chicken, pig, goat and buffalo sacrifice can be found. The priest kills a buffalo with a type of axe a stick which has been ornamented with a metal point. He forces the stick into the animal's belly at the spine and tries to pierce the liver or the spleen.⁴⁰ The customs of the Burmese Akha reputedly have been heavily influenced by those of the Tai-Shan. Thus their regular offering to the "lords and rulers of land and water" is borrowed from the Shan.⁴¹ The cultural contacts between the Burmese Akha and some of the Tai may also account for the fact that many of their divination techniques coincide. Thus, these Akha wish to determine whether or not a site may be used for habitation, an egg is thrown in the air. If the egg breaks it is a good sign. This custom has been established to have formed part of the reconstructed Ancient Tai culture in Volume I of *The Tai of Assam*. The Akha examine a sacrificed animal's liver, and an egg's yolk, for tellable signs. Especially noteworthy is the fact that they use chicken's thigh bones for divination. A sacrifice of a whole chicken is first thoroughly cleaned and studied. In a hole towards the end of the bone a pin of bamboo is inserted and the angle and the alignment between a bamboo pin and bone is used to read the future.⁴² The Akha's most important divination technique is known as this latter divination technique. H. Roux, who has reported on this particular method for the P. N. Soci. he, would have included it in his account. Both the Luchuan and Burmese Akha make use of bamboo star-shaped interdiction sticks with which they call *lu lah* or *lu long*. All Akha groups sacrifice dogs. Often the dogs are strung over village entrance gates in order to frighten away evil spirits.⁴³

f) The P'u Noi

The P'u Noi, who live in upper Laos, have been strongly influenced by Tai culture. This is clear, for example, when their terms in the field of religion and mythology are studied. Most of these are Tai words. The P'u Noi kill a pig every year before they prepare the fields. This sacrifice takes place at an altar which is situated at the northern end of the village. They make use of the *talaeo* symbol.

Every communal sacrifice for the guardian spirit of the land takes place in the seventh month (probably June). The village chief leads his tables and others to the altar outside the village which is divided like a "camp-field". Here are deposited two sabres, one man one pig with coarse rice, two pots with cooked rice, one bowl of paddy, arched area, and a length of white

⁴⁰ H. Roux, "Deux tribus de la region de Phongsavay (Laos septentrional)", *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-orient* Volume 24, 1924, p. 404.

⁴¹ P. W. Lewis, *Ethnographic Notes on the Akhas of Burma*, New Haven: Human Relations Area Files, 1960, pp. 256-57.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁴³ Roux, "Deux tribus de la region de Phongsavay", p. 404 and p. 428, G. Young, *The Hill Tribes of Northern Thailand*,

Bangkok: The Siam Society, 1962, p. 2; Boon Chuey Srisavasd. (editor), *The Hill Tribes of Siam*, Bangkok, Khun Aroon, 1963, p. 21, A. R. Walker (editor), *Farmers in the Hills, Ethnographic Notes on the Upland Peoples of North Thailand*, The School of Comparative Social Science, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 1975, opposite p. 183. In the latter source note also the bamboo *lu lah*.

cloth and one fitted with as well as a pair of candles. A pig and a fowl are killed and the spirits are addressed thus:⁴³

Spirit of the country, spirit of the mountains, spirit of the rivers, I invite you to accept this sacrifice. Let all who sow here be rich. Please give us your protection, make the coming season a lucky one, increase our prosperity and keep disease away from us.

The most common P'N' divination technique consists of the examination of fowls' thigh bones. In the skull holes of a fowl three insert sticks. Two thigh bones together with their wooden pins form a pattern which are scanned. Roux has collected twelve variations of this interpretation. From these it seems that if the two bones and their pins form exact mirror images the sign is one for good harvest. If two sticks lean into the left bone whilst a single stick points downward on the right it is a good omen. If the single pin on is a right angle with the bone the sign is bad.⁴⁴

g) The Karen, the Lawa, the Lahu and the Khmu

It is quite clear from the ethnographic literature that these peoples have all rich sacrificial traditions with pig, fowl and snakes probably the main. Unfortunately there are no reports which provide us with the ritual rules and regulations and in this section a collection of somewhat disparate snippets of interesting information is presented.

For the Karen there exists a report that they sacrifice a pig in order to propitiate the spirits, and that they hang the head of a pig vertically. A witness reports that the Karen and the Lahu are always working with the stone from the carved rectangles.⁴⁵ The Karen have until now been generally regarded as those of the Tai. Tuxen-Tutkay has been reluctant to place pig needles on their altars, the Lahu do not use square altars and as a result of this they dance around a tree which has been set up in their village.⁴⁶ Also the method of killing is described as different from the usual practice of the Tai who consider it important to have the blood flow into a bowl of the altar.⁴⁷ One aspect which may be most of the people concerned in this section is the barbaric ritual of human sacrifice. The Lahu call this *ta-le*,⁴⁸ the Karen also use this word but it is not clear if its use has not been an interest.⁴⁹ The Khmu know it under the name *ta-le*.⁵⁰

Divination techniques provide again an interesting field for comparison. Amongst the Lahu the most commonly used divination consists of taking

⁴³ Roux, "Deus tribus de la région de Phongsaly", p. 481.

⁴⁴ For further details, see the illustrations, *ibid.*, p. 479.

⁴⁵ H. I. Marshall, *The Karens of Burma*, Burma Pamphlets No. 8, London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1945, pp. 12-13, G. Young, *The Hill Tribes of Northern Thailand*, p. 11 and p. 70, E. W. Hutchinson, "The Lawa in Northern Siam", *Journal of the Siam Society*, Volume XXVII, Pt. 2, 1935, p. 159, E. J. Walton, "The Yang Kalo (Karieng) or White Karens", *Journal of the Siam Society*, Volume XVI, Pt. 1, 1922, p. 45.

⁴⁶ H. S. Hailett, *A Thousand Miles on an Elephant in the Shan States*, Edinburgh: Blackwood 1890, p. 3.

⁴⁷ A. R. Walker, "The La Hu Nyi (Red La Hu) New Year Celebrations", *Journal of the Siam Society*, Volume LVIII, Pt. 1, 1970, p. 639.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Plate 22.

⁴⁹ J. P. Andersen, "Some Notes about the Karen in Siam", *Journal of the Siam Society*, Volume XXVIII, Pt. 2, 1923, p. 54.

⁵⁰ H. Roux and Tran-Van-Cho, "Les Tsa Khmu", *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient*, Volume 27, 1927, p. 202.

[illegible]

Ch'ing-nan method of divination known as the K'ien, are for example: the rain, the thing, the pin, the rice. When taking the grain it must be declared whether an even or an uneven number is wished. If the declaration is "odd" to correspond with what is actually found between the fingers, this is taken to mean that the required spirit has made contact. A second successful prediction is needed for confirmation. Another method is the careful examination of an egg yolk, whereby special attention is given to the occurrence of red spots or streaks. Fowls feet are examined for the position of the toes and the animal's tongue hangs out to be straight before it indicates a good men. The chicken's eyes are checked and two white lines made its nostrils are observed. Finally a chicken's cranium is scrutinised in order to see whether it is evenly white. If any blood streaks are found, some bad luck lies ahead.²²

b) The Home

The Hmong mountain dwellers whose homeland appears to lie in southern China also have a sacrificial religion. Sometimes they offer buffaloes and even buffaloes seem to be levered up and tossed. Many of the sacrifices which have been recorded in detail concern levelling rituals, but it is likely there is also some information on rituals more closely connected with those central in this study.

The Hmong celebrate an elaborate three day New Year festival which starts during the dark phase of the moon in December after the harvest has been reaped. For three days all work stops. In each household chickens are sacrificed for the souls of the living and for the ancestors. A cock is sacrificed for the house spirit and its blood is daubed on a piece of paper. Chickens are also given to the spirit of the drum and to the healing powers. Apart from these household rituals the New Year festival is also the occasion for killing a pig to Huerlee Tawbeng, the community guardian spirit. This pig is paid for with contributions from all households. The ceremony takes place at a shrine outside the village. Various powers, such as those of the earth, the forest, the stream and the mountains are invoked. The pig is slaughtered, cooked and parts of it, together with a little rice, are offered to these spirits.⁵⁰

⁶² Telford, "Animism in Kengtung State", pp. 151-2.

"Further details can be found in Roux and Tran-Van-Chu, "Les Tsa Khmu", pp. 27-28.

244. Chindaryi. *The Religion of the*

Among Nuaa, Bangkok. The Siam Society, 1976, p. 135. Later Nuiit states that no community sacrifice takes place, but apparently this refers to the abnormal situation in the particular vil age which was the focus of research (pp. 135-39).

chicken's bones here. This ought to show a straight ridge bone curving upwards. . . . as there are no ribs the outer edge of the bones varies at intervals and turning. A very small part of the tibiae and part of the skull are taken into a . . . line. The tibiae take special care to clean the high bones, and examine the small holes of them. These bones ought to lie on the true side of the bones rather than the outside.³⁷ A large part of the chicken which may be sacrificed is . . . is well . . . to be straight and symmetrical.³⁸ A dinner given to a married couple (freshly) in the new year bottle, whilst mentioning a series of . . . sacrifices will . . . may be viewed with a person's sickness. The . . . and which is difficult but successful is regarded as the best answer.

The details of ritual and divination practices correspond so neatly with those which have been established for the Tai that some rather tentative contact at some point of history may be assumed. The distribution of the Hmong was . . . with a belt across southern China a distance as far as the state of Yunnan³⁹ does not deny this possibility. An argument against this is that if the up in the high, would not lead to intensive cultural contact and exchange. A theory which would take a points to a would be the one in which the Hmong are depicted as people who to were forced to seek their refuge in the is a result of severe clashes with the Chinese. The evidence brought forward in this section may, however, not be regarded as conclusive. Some of the villages, which formed the basic observation units of the reports may have been influenced by Tai peoples in comparatively recent times.⁴⁰

1) The Chinese traditions

Human sacrifices are recorded in Chinese history often in connection with warfare. Prisoners of war were beheaded and their blood smeared in the pile of victory which was carried by the Chinese army. If an enemy prince was captured the emperor often decided to sacrifice him in the manner described above and he is in his victim's blood.⁴¹ Such accounts have little or nothing in common with the ritual human sacrifices encountered here later. Other human sacrifices took place during burials, but such customs are mainly recorded a long time immediately preceding the Han period.⁴²

³⁷ Nasir Chindarsi, *The Religion of the Hmong Njao*, pp. 50-51.

³⁸ H. A. Bernhardt, *Aehn und Mein, Probleme der Angewandten Völkerkunde in Hinterindien*, Innsbruck: Wagner'sche Univ. Buchdruckerei, 1947, Volume I, pp. 18-20 and p. 192.

³⁹ F. M. Savina, *Histoire des Miao, Hing-kong*, Imprimerie de la Société des Missions-Etrangères, 1924, pp. 100-102.

⁴⁰ The intimate relationship between one Hmong group and the Tung-chin, a speaking low and group of southern China, are described by J. de Beauvoir, "A Miao Tribe of Southeast Kweichow and its

Cultural Configuration", p. 162 *et seq.* These Hmong are reported to have taken the plama culture into the mountains.

⁴¹ F. H. Gies, "Some Gleanings of Manners and Customs of the Chinese People as Revealed in Historical Narratives and Novels", *Journal of the Siam Society*, Volume XX, Pt. 3, 1927, pp. 227-28.

⁴² J. J. M. de Groot, *The Religious System of China*, Volume II, Book 1, Taipei: Chung Wen Publishing, 1972, p. 721 *et seq.* See also M. Granot, *The Religion of the Chinese People* (translated and edited by M. Freedman), Oxford: Blackwell, 1975, pp. 79-80.

For the purpose of this study more relevant information is the fact that in early China as early as the second century of our era, has at the disposal of what in this study is called the "Proto-Tai" period, dogs were sometimes slaughtered. For this white dogs were selected and their carcasses were hung at the city gates in order to ward off calamities. The dog's blood was also sprinkled around for exorcising purposes.⁶⁰

With respect to divination from very early times the Chinese oracle bone divination system developed. The details need not be elaborated here since this type of divination has not been encountered amongst the Tai.⁶¹ A different Chinese divination system, one which has been found amongst the Tai and other ethnic groups, is the use of the divining blocks. This goes back at least to the eighth century of our era. A Chinese altar is not complete without at least a pair of such blocks. In early times they have been described as kidney shaped pieces of bamboo to six or eight inches long, each having one flat and one convex side. They are dropped on the ground and if they both end lying with their flat or with the convex side up the answer is read as negative. If one shows convex and the other flat it is considered as a positive sign from the unseen power who is being addressed.⁶² The divination with a cock's shin bones, the small holes of which serve to determine luck or misfortune, also is a custom found in China and which goes back a considerable number of centuries. It has been described for the people of Kwangtung as far back as the early Han period.⁶³

D) The Ch'iang

In the varied literature on minority groups in southern China a communal springtime sacrifice amongst the Ch'iang, who live in western Szechuan was encountered.⁶⁴ Although there is no reason to believe that the Ch'iang and the Tai peoples have ever been in direct contact, it is interesting to take note of these customs. Indeed, the fact that no direct contact may be presumed makes a case in which to a certain extent the premises of this book may be tested. If a large number of ritual details prove to be similar, it will be necessary to reassess the model of early Tai history upon which this analysis rests.

Every spring the Ch'iang hold a large scale ceremony in order to ask for good crops, for rain and for a prosperous year. In return they promise to

⁶⁰ J. I. M. de Groot, *The Religious System of China*, Volume VI, Book II, p. 1006. *et seq.*

⁶¹ The Lolo are reported to throw lamb's shoulderbones in the fire and to examine the resulting cracks. For details see Lin Yuch-hua, *The Lolo of Liang Shun* (translated by Ju-Shu Pan), New Haven: HRAF Press, 1961, pp. 128-29. The Lolo method of making a great number of parallel incisions on wood and counting whether or not they come to an uneven number (this being auspicious), resembles very much the Kachin system of tearing a leaf in long shreds, which has been described above. For that matter, there is a certain similarity between

throwing a shoulder blade in the fire and a piece of bamboo, in both cases the destructive forces of the fire leave tell-tale signs.

⁶² De Groot, *The Religious System of China*, Volume VI, Book II, pp. 1285-87.

⁶³ References to the appropriate Chinese sources are mentioned in H. Stabel, *Die Li-Stämme der Insel Hainan, ein Beitrag zur Volkskunde Südchinas*, Berlin: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1937, p. 69.

⁶⁴ D. C. Graham, *The Customs and Religion of the Ch'iang*, Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, Volume 135, Number 1, Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1958, pp. 58-64 and pp. 102-3.

give a seven-day fast in the full moon after it can be decided whether or not the year will be a good one. The sacrifices are made at two places on the hillside, one at the sacred grove. Women who are believed to be impure and unmarried are not allowed to attend these rituals. Yaks, goats and chickens are the animals most frequently used in sacrifices, but of these animals the goat is most important and most frequently selected. Only milk-buffaloes and water buffaloes are used and more than one animal is killed. They are killed by the same method, a black or a white. The animals are put into a basket and the head is cut off and the body is put into a vessel. Some of it is sprinkled on the ground. The goats are killed up a slope, first the right ear and central are taken, the ear being stuck in a paper flag and then the penis and testicles are made into a fire which must be made of cedar twigs. The altar is a triangular stone. The rest of the animal is skinned and its fat is melted and poured on fresh twigs. The brains and kidneys are separately offered to the gods. Finally the flesh and blood are boiled and eaten and any remainder may be divided and taken home by the participants.

It is clear from this summary account that though the two groups share a general sacrificial tradition, the La and the Chiang Jui differ completely in the ritual details.

k) The Muong

The largest collective Muong ritual is the one held in late January or early February which corresponds with the New Year. At that time the villagers observe certain restrictions: they refrain from working in the fields and place bonfires, stars and incense star signs which they call *muong*.⁴⁸ They prepare seven separate offerings: sweets as well as some game, such as deer. If no deer has been obtained, a wild boar, a buffalo, a pig or a number of fowls may serve as substitute. During the night before the commencement of the ritual, the offerings are presented at the village chief's house. The day after the ritual cakes and rice wine are offered at the cult house where prayers are said and all people prostrate formally. Separately the tribute to the gods in spirit to the ancestors, to the spirit of the earth, to the spirit of rice and to the spirit of buildings.

Amongst the Muong, *kuon* (any animal near an altar is strictly avoided). The victims are slaughtered and prepared beforehand so as not to disturb the feelings of the river deities. Blood may never flow before the spirits, be a sign the spending of money is a waste of effort.⁴⁹ The animals that may be offered range from various types of domestic animals such as buffalo, pig, duck, chicken, etc. The altar occupies a special place because spirit is generally not eaten amongst the Muong and only after a prescribed cog sacrifice, such as the one during the first sowing ceremony, will they break this food taboo.

Several methods of divination are mentioned by Gutschow. A common one is the throwing of bamboo stalks to see whether or not a

⁴⁸ J. Cuissinier, *Les Muong, géographie humaine et sociologie*, Université de Paris, Travaux et mémoires de l'Institut d'Ethnologie, Volume XLV, Paris, Institut d'Ethnologie, 1946, p. 136, 288 and 309. The following details are taken from the same source.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 352-53.

spirit has made contact with the priest or whether this spirit finds the offering acceptable. Another consists of the examination of a bucket of chickens to be in order to discover if a family may expect a good year or whether there are problems lying ahead. A family's fortunes may also be examined by lighting all members light a cotton wick each of which has been dipped in oil. All those whose wicks burn well may expect a good fortune, but if a wick does not catch fire easily or if it burns badly it bodes ill for a sicklier. The diviner will suddenly wave a stick with his fan and if all flames extinguish with the first movement the family as a whole cannot expect much luck. If on the other hand some wicks keep burning this is taken as a good omen.⁷⁰

Muong sacrifices are thus found to diverge considerably from those of the Tai. Whilst the Tai consider the flow of blood near an altar an essential aspect of the ceremony, the Muong do not attach almost any value to it. Whilst the Tai choose a buffalo as their best gift for the guardian spirit, the Muong prefer to offer a deer. Whilst the Tai kill a deer to ward off sickness, the Muong kill a dog during an agricultural ritual. In the case of both peoples of the two groups there are, however, considerable similarities and also the two ethnic groups share the use of the bamboo interdicted zone.

D) Other Vietnamese minority groups

Apart from the Muong people there are many other ethnic divisions in Vietnam such as the Jarai, the Rung, the Bahnar and the Stieng, who all speak Mon-Khmer languages and the Jara, representatives of the Siy peoples in main in Southeast Asia speaking a Malay-Polynesian language. The rich sacrificial traditions of these minority groups cannot be described here in detail, but for the purpose of this study certain aspects have been extrapolated from the ethnographic accounts.

In general, the Vietnamese highlanders sacrifice hilly oxen, even pigs, goats and fowls. Dog sacrifices are rare and they appear to be held only on exceptional occasions. The Stieng must sacrifice a black dog to atone for murder. A horse sacrifice can be held amongst the Jarai. Several of these groups reserve white animals for offerings to the spirit of thunder and black ones for the spirits of spiders. Only men attend the great communal sacrifices.

The sacrificial details such as the method of killing, the way of presenting gifts, the shape of the altars and other ritual particulars are often considerably at variance with those recorded for the Tai peoples.⁷² As an example of a typical Vietnamese highland sacrifice, the most important Jarai communal ritual is taken. This lasts seven days and it is held during the dry season. During this great sacrifice every family kills a buffalo, a pig and a goat. The day before the killing the buffalo with his horns decorated is led to the feet of the great mast which rises over the sacrificial post. The

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 484-85.

⁷¹ P. Guilleminet, "La tribu Bahnar du Koutum", *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient*, Volume XLV, 1952, p. 422.

⁷² J. Bouliet, *Pays des Miao, domaine des genres Nggar Mao, Nggar Yaang*, Publication de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient,

Volume LXII, Paris: Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1967, pp. 51-54, M. M. J. Kremlin, "Rites agraires des Relangao", *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient*, Volume IX, 1909, pp. 493-94. Le-van-Hao, "Les fêtes saisonnières au Vietnam", *Revue du Sud-est Asiatique*, 1962, No. 4, pp. 265-315.

next day the animal has his legs tied together and lies on his side when he is pierced in the chest with lance thrusts. Then a pig and a goat are also killed. The hide of the three animals is smeared with fat on its back and arms of a long series of the family. A tree is planted between the pigs where the animal is killed. The long series at the foot of which the holed hides appear to symbolise gigantic snakes or goblins. The buffalo's blood will make the ground of the muds fertile, as the rains will help the goblins to grow in the soil. The Jirat consists of a ritual to be spirit's nurture and therefore the victim to consume any of the sacrificed animals because evil spirits are believed to be especially fond of goats' blood. Therefore he or the muds is moving away evil spirits from a village consists of the killing of a goat in a river. The blood rapidly flows away, hopefully taking the greedy malevolent powers along.⁷⁴

m) The Khmer

There are many accounts of human sacrifices in Cambodia and some of these are rather curious. By and large Khmer human sacrifices fall into two categories. The first consists of an offering to appease a powerful spirit and to ask for the region's prosperity and rain. The sacrificer armed with a sabre dances around the victim and severs his head with a single cut. The dried head is brought to the streams sacred to the deity at the future. It spreads over the stream the grain and rain may be expected in the entire district, but if should fall to one side or only part of the region would obtain good rains. The victim's head is impaled and his flesh is chopped into many pieces and offered to the divinity. Buffalo offerings have taken the place of these human sacrifices, but they are performed in a similar manner. The way its blood flows is interpreted similarly and its meat is divided in the same way.⁷⁵

This account appears related to the somewhat vague oral history reported earlier for southern Laos whereby it is said that formerly humans were sacrificed in order to obtain rain. When it is realised that the Cambodian tales described above are of considerable age, going back to the time when the Khmer empire extended over the region now called southern Laos, it becomes apparent that the Laotian account refers to the old Cambodian practices.

The second type of human sacrifice concerns the burial of a live person in the spot where in numerous gates or fortifications were built. This interment at the foundations is intended to create fierce guardian spirits. The custom has also been mentioned for the Burmese and the Siamese.

The Cambodian village communal sacrifice has been described in some detail by Pierre Maspéro. The ritual may be held twice a year, once at the end of the dry season, to ask for rain, and once at the end of the rainy

⁷⁴J. D. Lajoux, *Le bonheur du déluge, villages des montagnes d'Indochine*, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1977, pp. 6-11 and pp. 302-5.

⁷⁵P. B. Lafont, *Tulou Djuat, Coutumier de la tribu Jirat*, Publications de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, Volume 11, Paris: Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1963, p. 210 and p. 253.

⁷⁶D. P. Chandler, "Royally Sponsored Human Sacrifices in Nineteenth Century Cambodia: the Cult of Nak Ta Mo Sa (Mahisasuramardini) at Ba Phnoon" *Journal of the Siam Society* Volume 62 Pt. 2, 1974, p. 221, Pierre Maspéro, *Etude sur les rites agraires des Cambodgiens*, Volume 1, pp. 243-46.

season to ask for happiness and peace. On the night preceding the sacrifice the villagers dance and pray in a procession through the village, carrying a pair of twin levels which has been set up at the intersection of a street and a central tree. The next morning families assemble here the common village spirit and the villagers, in procession, bring a buffalo and tether him to a nearby tree. The officiating priest goes into trance and becomes possessed with the guardian spirit. The buffalo's throat is cut with a knife and its blood is caught in a earthenware vase. As soon as the animal is cut the head is severed and presented to the guardian spirit and the rest of the body is further divided. The priest is possessed by the spirit of his own blood and puts some wax on each of the four limbs of the remainder. Villagers then ask him whether or not the future is promising. No long afterwards the spirit leaves and the villagers prepare to eat the buffalo meat. Nothing may be taken home.

On the Cardamom mountains the language is somewhat different. The buffalo is taken as an offering to the spirits of rain which is of importance in the coming season. A ritual song, *hama-hama-hama-hama-hama*, is sung. On other occasions the ground directly under the victim is taken to be impregnated with the semen just as the Christian stone is taken which was poured in taken as a district map. In this water pouring ceremony it may be that whether called the Kimer in Laos or not, are based on the same. It is significant to be imagined that the Laotian stone represents the old sacrificial stone which may have been dropped in blood during the ritual. A last Cardamom divination technique and this time the victim has not been sacrificed for the Tai consists of turning three candles upside down which they are allowed to let them drip wax on a piece of banana leaf. The three candles may be taken to stand for three deities or spirits. If a candle suddenly extinguishes it is taken as a bad sign for the corresponding region. The flow of wax may increase or decrease during the last burning and this indicates signs of abundant rain and dryness respectively. The flow of wax drops down a stick straight. This is taken as an indication of some thing good or bad. The resulting wax patterns on the banana leaf are also used to forecast the future.¹¹

n) The Pear

The last group in this overview of peoples who surround the Tai are the Pear. Mon-Khmer speakers in the upland regions of Cambodia.¹² The only animal sacrificed by the Pear are buffaloes, even pigs and fowls. The Pear celebrate communal sacrificial rituals every year in May and in December. When there is a drought an epidemic or some other calamity threatens a Pear village they erect the great *Saek* (east wind) lasts two days and a night. *Saek* is held outside the village where a large white cloth is surrounded by banana trunk stems. On this occasion the sacrificed buffalo is led to the shrine, the guardian spirit of the region is invoked and the priest may be possessed by this power. The sacrificed buffalo, killing a special sacrificial knife is used. The buffalo is held between two posts and its neck

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 242 ff.

¹² *Ibid.*, Volume II, p. 410.

¹³ J. Brenguier, "Note sur les populations

de la région des montagnes des Cardamones", *Journal of the Siam Society*, Volume II, 1906, p. 35 ff.

has been recorded. Again no pattern is readily discernible in the choice between these two favourite colours. The broad perspective suggests that the colour red is the commonly prescribed colour for the most important Tai. The offering known as the red dog sacrifice is necessary as the result of intimate contact with the culture. The Lawa select a red bull, a red cock and a red hen for their regular sacrifice and on an important occasion they present a cream coloured bull. It is essential that the bull in question is not castrated and is even in colour "to the hairs of his tail".¹⁰

The last remark may present an important clue regarding the colour prescriptions. The colour specification may well be directly related to the general principle that the greatest gifts to the gods must be without any blemish and of great beauty. Amongst the traditional Tai groups, as well as amongst many of their neighbours, it is not permitted to present the gods an animal which is sick, old, or maimed. If, however, effective, attractive and persuasive, the offering must be strong and vigorous. Hence at least some of the prescriptions regarding colour may be simply the outcome of a wish to give a thing of beauty.

In some of the cases, the choice of colour is prescribed by nature. It would be difficult to find a boar in traditional Southeast Asia which is not black. Similarly a duck or a fowl of an even colour tends to be pure white. This consideration may explain some of the cases where a red dog is selected for sacrifice for dogs with reddish coats predominate in the region. However, this reference to the laws of nature explains by no means all cases. Sometimes there may even be a deeper, hidden, ~~symbolic~~ meaning attached to a specific selection of colour but only now there have been no clear cases collected. It is not impossible that a deeper meaning of the red colour for some dog sacrifices will be found in a systematic analysis of myths and legends, for it has been remarked by several researchers that the dog may have featured large in some myths as an ancestral animal, and that there are traces of what some authors believe to be fetishism in these beliefs.¹¹

At the end of chapter 4 of this book the problem of why some Tai groups refer to a dog with the expression 'golden deer' was raised. It is unlikely that this reflects a practice whereby a real deer of a particular hue was sacrificed, because unlike deer, amongst the people are not in control of what type of game they will be able to bring home to an offering. The wider reading on sacrifices suggests a possible explanation for this peculiar custom. A Chiang priest makes use of a series of ritual phrases when addressing the spirits substituting ordinary words with elaborate expressions which have no immediate relevant meaning to the outsider. The Chiang priest presenting offerings to the gods says "black deer"

¹⁰E. W. Hutchason, "The Laws in Northern Siam", p. 139.

¹¹The remarkable position of the dog can be found in the following sources. A. L. M. Bonifacy, "Etude sur les Tay de la rivière Claire, au Tonkin et dans la Chine meridionale (Yunnan et Kouang si)", *Tung Pao*, Volume VIII, 1907, p. 95; W. Koppers, "Der Hund in der Mythologie der Zirkumpazifischen Völker",

Wiener Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte und Linguistik, Volume I, 1930, pp. 379-399; H. Stühel, "The Yao of the Province of Kuanglung", *Monumenta Serica*, Volume III, 1938, p. 373, and his *Die Li-Stämme der Insel Hainan*, p. 277, and E. Porcé-Maspero, *Etude sur les rites agraires des Cambodgiens*, Volume II, pp. 435-6 et passim.

The examination of the river was also found with the Khasi and the Akha. Only the latter group appears to have had intense contact with the river examining. Tai a river examining may have been a result of river borrowing. The Khasi case need not necessarily indicate a measure of contact. In the first place, the river in question has not been described in detail and it was not established when the ritual started back to front and how to interpret the signs. It is possible that the two reports dealt with quite distinct customs. Secondly, there is no evidence of any other aspects of the respective customs suggesting that the peoples concerned were in close contact.

The temple bone examination is quite different. The interview suggests that the Tai state the custom with the Laha, the Khasi and the Hmong. The communities from which the custom apparently had spread to have had considerable population and the river was not a borrowing from Tai peoples. Since the custom appears fairly widespread for the Tai it suggests that in the case the Tai may have been the donor and the Laha, Khasi and Hmong may have received the custom from the Tai.

The scanning of the life line resulted in quite spectacular findings in the case of the custom of examining the life lines. It has been encountered amongst the Akha, the Pado, the Naga, the Laha, the Hmong and extending the reach even further it is found in the Acheq and women pins in few of which bones has been reported to be a common divination practice. In all cases, the custom is Hmong. The main source for this widespread technique is found to be the Laha, where, where the practice was considered to be common. The fact that the most Tai records (the early parts of the Acheq, Bura, etc.) do not mention suggests that the Tai learned the custom from somewhere else, possibly from mainland Southeast Asia. It seems that the custom may have been borrowed by comparing details of the actual rules of interpretation.

The custom of interpreting the manner in which a sacrificed buffalo falls and the direction it falls, which have been reported among the Laha and the Lha, appears to be shared with the Khasi. A case can be made for cultural borrowing rather than from the Khasi to certain Tai groups. The same custom is found in the Acheq, Bura, etc. and a consistent similarity in the manner of the custom. The Acheq, Bura, etc. and Bura established tradition of the Khasi where it is not only using bones, but also using the same bones and it may have formed the basis for the comparable Lao custom.

Apart from the Red Tai, the custom of a wolf it has been reported also amongst the Khasi, the Hmong and the Miao. These peoples have living the same customs in proximity to the river. The practice seems to be a common one for the peoples. It is suggested that the Red Tai learned it from one of their neighbours.

A Chinese legend in the form of a folk song, etc. mentions the throwing of three pieces of bone into the air and the resulting cracks in the surface. This is a common custom in the Khasi. It has been noted in the Acheq, Bura, etc. and the Miao. The practice of the wolf is similar to the bones of the Acheq, Bura, etc.

*H. Stübel, *Die Li-Stämme der Insel Hainan*, p. 69.

and examining the details of the way it has burst is representative of the Chinese technique. If indeed the two types of divination techniques are but variants on the same theme, this would help explain its rather widely scattered occurrence which may in fact be a late and retroactive process of diffusion. Thus far this technique has not been found abroad in the Tai divination practices.

Another technique which probably first developed in China is the throwing of two bamboo sticks, each having a curved and a straight side. This appears to be one of the simplest and easiest the execution of which needs no special training. It seems fairly widely spread and has been found for the Black Tai who probably learnt it from one of their neighbours. Other simple games encountered are the fairly widespread techniques of taking a number of rice and counting if the number is even or uneven or guessing whether an even or uneven number will be on the top of an egg.

An examination of the various divination practices encountered thus far shows an intricate pattern of regional distributions. Lip smashing is encountered in Assam, the examination of a fowl's intestines and the tearing up of leaves occurs in eastern Assam and a part of Burma. The interpretation of holes in fowl's feet bones can be found in a belt ranging from Assam through Burma, northern Thailand, to southern China to Hainan Island. These and other examples demonstrate that each technique appears to have its own history. Some techniques have a venerable one going back thousands of years and some have come to have in virtually the same form throughout the ages. Possibly the most remarkable aspect to emerge from the overview of divination techniques is the fact that compared to sacrificial ritual they are relatively little culture-bound. Some of these techniques seem to have spread with only slight modification from one ethnic group to another.

It is possible to suggest two reasons for this phenomenon of apparently little culture-boundness of many divination practices. The first one is the circumstance that all the peoples involved seem to share an interest in these matters. At least all the groups encountered there is a shared belief that communication can be established by tracking chance phenomena and taking the results as a message from the gods. Often the divination practices are but one of the methods used to gain contact with the unseen powers. The Ancient Tai must have also had a well developed system of communicating with the heavenly powers in fact. The second possible reason for the apparent small degree of culture-boundness is the fact that given the shared interest in matters of establishing direct communication, all divination techniques are but means to an end and they are only as good as their results. When confronted with a more satisfactory means of contacting the gods, ritual experts may be not try it without apparently changing the essential features of their religion.

Just like the shared sacrificial and divination practices indicate cultural contact and borrowings, a close study of the details may reveal local variations in which some of the contact must have taken place. However, it does not seem clear that a close intimate and prolonged contact is necessary to initiate the latter a considerable number of individual borrowings. The fact that the diffusion of such an inclusion may be readily where there are no corresponding core cultural areas such as

major life-cycle rituals or communal sacrificial rituals. The latter types comprise a much larger and more fundamental area of cultural tradition. It was clear from the search in the literature that communal sacrificial rituals can take many shapes and forms, and that there were only very few of these rituals which could be compared with those of the Tai. In a wider perspective it becomes clear that the Tai sacrificial traditions form indeed a separate set of customs, distinct from those of most of their neighbours. This may be read as a corroboration of the premise that the Tai tradition at some stage not too far in the past indeed formed a homogeneous culture and that therefore the study of Ancient Tai culture is possible through comparing the time-honoured aspects of the individual Tai groups.

PART B

TIME-RECKONING

ANCIENT ASPECTS OF TAI CALENDARS

In this chapter all ancient reckoning are taken for consideration, namely ancient lunar days and solar days, ancient lunar days. Given the ancient Tai groups and the fact that they have often adopted different lunar systems, neighbouring peoples for subject is a very complicated. I except the Tai of Assam, all the months which begin in April with the Assamese term Baitai. The name of this month, as well as the calendar and its history in its variation are derived from ancient lunar system of the Tai groups. Some of the Tai groups who live further eastwards may recognise this month with a different term, and others may not even know whether the month or the system is reflecting the calendar of their ancestors. The presentation of the full details of each Tai calendar together with the history of the cultural contacts which led to the formation of each particular system of the reckoning would fill several books, whilst establishing many facts which may already be assumed with a slight degree of confidence. Thus it is already quite well known that the present-day Siam and Burma calendars have many elements in common with that of India. Consequently the general direction of borrowing from west to east holds for Siam and Laos at least in the matter of systems of the reckoning. Similarly the Tai groups of northern Vietnam derive from Indian lunar calendar the Vietnamese system and the Tai of Siam and China are not exempted from the domination by the Chinese.

Therefore only general aspects of Tai calendars are stated in this chapter, namely those which seem to reflect an early stage of development, or which appear to be not the result of relatively recent borrowing from neighbouring groups. This holds consequently for the part of information to be presented, not only because of the existence of "Hinduist eras" or lists of the seven day week are not so well attested, these being the result of contacts after the Tai spread over mainland Southeast Asia, but also because such aspects of the reckoning have often escaped the notice of the traveler and the ethnographer, and indigenous sources on these features are also rare.

For each Tai group for whom apparently antiquated features of their calendar were noticed, the material is presented in the same order, namely from large parts of time to small ones. After the overview of this factual material an assessment is made regarding whether these features seen sufficiently well preserved as to enable a reconstruction of "Ancient Tai" culture. In the next chapter the results are placed into a wider perspective.

The Ahom

The earliest date connected with the Ahom use before (and after) they entered Assam is the year of the three lunar cycles (6365 year cycle known as the three year cycle). This six year cycle is ubiquitous in the of Burma and it is also used by the most Assamese. It has often

TABLE I
THE AHOM SIXAGENARY CYCLE

Kap Saew 1st year	Kap Mit 2nd year	Kap San 3rd year	Kap Singa 4th year	Kap Si 5th year	Kap Ng 6th year
Dap Plow 7th year	Dap Knew 8th year	Dap Rao 9th year	Dap Mut 10th year	Dap Chow 11th year	Dap Mao 12th year
Rai Ng 13th year	Rai Saew 14th year	Rai Mit 15th year	Rai San 16th year	Rai Singa 17th year	Rai Si 18th year
Mung Mao 19th year	Mung Plow 20th year	Mung Kaew 21st year	Mung Rao 22nd year	Mung Mut 23rd year	Mung Chow 24th year
Pluck Si 25th year	Pluck Ng 26th year	Pluck Saew 27th year	Pluck Mit 28th year	Pluck San 29th year	Pluck Singa 30th year
Kat Chow 31st year	Kat Mao 32nd year	Kat Plow 33rd year	Kat Kaew 34th year	Kat Rao 35th year	Kat Mut 36th year
Khut Singa 37th year	Khut Si 38th year	Khut Ng 39th year	Khut Saew 40th year	Khut Mit 41st year	Khut San 42nd year
Rung Mut 43rd year	Rung Chow 44th year	Rung Mao 45th year	Rung Plow 46th year	Rung Kaew 47th year	Rung Rao 48th year
Tow San 49th year	Tow Singa 50th year	Tow Si 51st year	Tow Ng 52nd year	Tow Saew 53rd year	Tow Mit 54th year
Ka Rao 55th year	Ka Mut 56th year	Ka Chow 57th year	Ka Mao 58th year	Ka Plow 59th year	Ka Kaew 60th year

been described¹ but because of the peculiarities of an Assamese influenced system of transliteration which tends to obscure some of the similarities between Tai languages and Ahom² the whole cycle of sixty years is once more written out in Table I. From the manner in which this table is set out it is clear that the cycle is composed of two repeating series of terms: one series of ten found at the beginning of the combination of words (Kap, Dap, Rai, Mung, Pluck, Kat, Khut, Rung, Tow and Ka) and one of twelve at the end of each combination (Saew, Plow, Ng, Mao, Si, Chow, Singa, Mut, San, Rai, Mit and Kaew). The first year of a cycle is Kap Saew. The series of ten is repeated six times and the series of twelve five times before the Kap Saew combination recurs and a new cycle begins.

The position of the Ahom sixty-year cycle with reference to the Western calendar is such that 179-180 is a Dap Mut year, the forty-second year of a cycle. In traditional calendars the point in the Western year when the Ahom year changes name is half-November, at the beginning of the traditional Ahom first month of the year.

¹ N. N. Acharyya, *The History of Medieval Assam*, Gauhati: Dutta Baruah, 1966, pp. 130-31. B. Barua and N. N. Deodhai Phukan (editors), *Ahom Lexicons*, pp. 190-3. J. N. Phukan, "A Note on Lak-ni", *Journal of the University of Gauhati*, Volume XX, 1969, Part, pp. 67-73.

² See above, Chapter I, *A note on transliteration*. The exercise involved in the making of Table I comprised considerable work, because the sources in Ahom script,

including *Ahom Lexicons*, were often inconsistent in their spelling. For example, in order to decide upon a spelling for the ninth of the sixty-year cycle, it was necessary to choose between *taw* and *taw*, as well as between *chan* and *san*. *Taw* was preferred, because the variant *taw* appeared likely to have been caused by a printing error, whilst the choice between *chan* and *san* was decided in favour of *san* by the evidence found in present-day Ahom calendars.

The Ahom word for "month" is *dim*. The twelve months of the year are, in order, *Dim K'ei*, *Dim S'at*, *Dim So*, *Dim Ch'ei*, *Dim Rak*, *Dim Ch'ei*, *Dim P'ei*, *Dim K'ei*, *Dim So*, *Dim S'at*, *Dim So*, *Dim So*. Anybody familiar with the Chinese calendar will find a close resemblance of these names to the Chinese names for the months. They represent the ordinary Tai quadrants, *Ch'ei* (East), *S'at* (South), *So* (West), *P'ei* (North). The first two months are not immediately clear, but they represent, I think, the regular Tai quadrants, one and two in Ahom, *Ch'ei* and *S'at*, which are the first part of the series of quadrants. (Compare the use of Tai prefixes in the birth order, see Volume I, Chapter 2). At present the Ahom month is reckoned independently, the process of the moon. The Ahom calendar has been synchronised to the solar year with the Assamese. In Table 2 the correspondences and lengths in days are given. The Assamese differs in this respect from the Assamese system not only in the names given to the months, but also in the calculation of the period upon which the year begins. The Ahom year is dated from the New Year, but what the last Assamese month, *Bohag*, which falls in April.

TABLE 2
AHOM AND ASSAMESE MONTHS

Ahom name	Assamese	International	Days
Dim Ch'ei	Aghor	November-December	30
Dim K'ei	Push	December-January	30
Dim S'at	Magh	January-February	30
Dim So	Phagun	February-March	30
Dim Ch'ei	S'at	March-April	30
Dim Rak	Bohag	April-May	31
Dim Ch'ei	Jet	May-June	31
Dim P'ei	Ahar	June-July	31
Dim K'ei	Shraavan	July-August	31
Dim So	Bhad	August-September	31
Dim S'at	Ashwin	September-October	30
Dim So Song	Kartik	October-November	30

From the earliest parts of the Baranjs onward it is clear that the Ahom used apart from the sexagesimal year cycle also a sixty-day cycle, which, since it is calculated fully independent from the movements of the sun and moon, may be called a sixty-day "week". The sexagesimal cycle of days is known by the same pairs of names encountered in the sixty-year cycle and enumerated in Table 1. Traditional Ahom priests have made a calendar in which the sexagesimal day cycle is used and according to their calculations January 1, 1980 was a *Ka Plow* day, or a fiftieth day in the cycle.

For the division of the Ahom day a list of specific moments as mentioned in Ahom manuscripts was collected by Dr. J. N. Phukan of Gauhati University. Several of these could be readily identified with the aid of a Phakey speaker¹ and the results are given in Table 3. At first sight the table contains but a series of expressions regarding moments of the day which give no indication of a specific system of time reckoning. Words of this sense, of course, as we are probably universal in human

¹ I thank Dr. Phukan for letting me use of it in this volume.
record his list and for permitting the use

TABLE 3
AUMM TRADITIONAL DIVISIONS OF THE DAY

Ahom expression	Description
Puu tji khuen na kai khan	Rising, before cock's crow
Na kai khan	Cock's crow
Chao lung	Early morning
Puu luk chan	Getting-up time
Puu chak naa	Face-washing time
Puu kang nou ban rung	Time of sunrise
Rung k n ngai	Breakfast time
Ban tin	Mid day
Kin ban	Midday meal time
Ban kham	Evening time
Ban tuk	Sleep time

society. However, on closer inspection it will be clear that the list contains some words which appear related to English, such as *ben-tin* and *khon*, which may gain importance when they are compared with similar lists for other Tai groups.

The Khamyang, the Phokey and the Khaniti

The representatives of these groups which have lived for several generations in Assam and in the P. A. States are in different everyday purposes. Only among the P. A. States, some have names to indicate that the 120 a ten-day week has been in the Assam and parts of the P. A. States, the names of this week but in a different way with several other words the following should be established Kap, Nan H, Maeng Piao, Ka, Khot, Hui, Tao and Kaa. It was also revealed that these ten days each were used and two were regarded as *work days* during which certain types of work were performed. While the ten were *work days* could not be remembered. A comparison between the P. A. ten-day week and the series of ten words already noted as part of the Ahom sexagenary cycle establishes that the two are the same.

That the Paakey once used, not only the ten-day cycle, but also the whole fully flexed sesaggaal sutra lay, was proven during the second ten-week period when at Nampally where a document was encountered which contains various tables of calculating lucky and unlucky events. One of the tables presents a series of twenty six numbers, separated into twelve columns of eight and the eight further subdivided into pairs. The twelve columns start at the four months beginning with the fifth month because the Paakey begins again in October with the beginning of the Indian New Year in April. In other words the Paakey appears to use a lunar calendar in which the year begins in December. The pairs of numbers indicate which days of a seven-day week may be regarded as very auspicious, which ones only auspicious, which ones somewhat unlucky and which straight forwardly unlucky. Another table from the document presents two columns of fifteen each with a sign indicating its being fortunate or unfortunate. The first fifteen stand for the moon days of a waxing moon and the second row for the moon's waning part. The table reinforces the fact that the Paakey reckoned on a lunar basis. The most interesting table from the document for the purpose of this study, however, is one from

which an auspicious day for holding a marriage ceremony can be read, because the basic unit is the full seven-day cycle of days. Because of this interest I have transcribed the word which were in Shan script and in this transcription also by a reading of the Shan words by a Shan reading Phakey-speaker. The results are presented in Table 4.

From Table 4 it is evident that the Phakey once used a sixty-day cycle made up of a decimal and a duodecimal sub-cycle. The ten-day sequence

TABLE 4
THE PHAKEY LAKNI SYSTEM AND MARRIAGE

Kap Ceu	Nap Pao	Hai Ngil	Mueng Mao	Puek Sii	Kat Seu	Khut Singae	Hung Mut	Tao Sin	Kaa Hao
Kai Mit	Nap Hao	Hai Ceu	Mueng Pao	Puek Ngil	Kat Mao	Khut Sii	Hung Seu	Tao Singae	Kaa Mut
Kap San	Nap Hao	Hai Mit	Mueng Hao	Puek Hao	Kat Pao	Khut Hao	Hung Mao	Tao Sii	Kaa Seu
Kap Singae	Nap Mut	Hai San	Mueng Mao	Puek Mit	Kat Hao	Khut Ceu	Hung Pao	Tao Ngil	Kaa Mao
Kap Sii	Nap Seu	Hai Singae	Mueng Mut	Puek San	Kat Hao	Khut Mit	Hung Kau	Tao Ceu	Kaa Pao
Kap Ngil	Nap Mao	Hai Sii	Mueng Seu	Puek Singae	Kat Mut	Khut San	Hung Hao	Tao Mit	Kaa Kau

Legend

- stands for: if married on such a day the wife will die early
- stands for: if married on such a day the husband will die early
- stands for: an auspicious day for marriage
- stands for: after bearing two children the wife will die
- stands for: the wife will die in labour
- stands for: husband and wife will not get along and separate.

is identical with the one mentioned above. The series of twelve s' Cee, Pae, Ngi, Mao, Su, See, Sngan, Mut, San, Hae, Mui and Kae. The days are not absolutely identical with those found in the Ahom tradition, but there are sufficient correspondences to establish that the Ahom and the Phakey *khom* systems are closely related.

Table 4 shows of interest the use of the type of symbols which are used to indicate auspiciousness and inauspiciousness. The basic symbol is a loop, and each day of the cycle is marked with two loops in various combinations. If the loops are upright and so close together that they half overlap the sign is interpreted to mean that the day is good for a marriage. This sign occurs in 1st over one third of the cycle's days. All five other combinations be deemed. It may be assumed that the loops stand for bride and groom themselves and that the sign is to be interpreted as a symbol for "harmony" or "person". Two over standing upright "persons" stand for "harmony". A "person" in erect and superimposed upon an erect stands for "disharmony". That some such considerations aided by the use of the loop symbol is confirmed by the fact that the Yuan and other traditional tables to calculate auspicious and inauspicious marriage dates make use of the same symbol. Moreover the symbols for "auspicious" in these tables are identical. The exact interpretation of the various inauspicious signs shows slightly differing meanings.⁴ Understanding the proper code in these diagrams may aid in interpreting hitherto little understood documents. Thus there exists a Bla-k-Ta manuscript which shows some "télé-bêche" figures which have puzzled researchers. In the light of the above it could be argued that they may indicate "disharmony".⁵

The Khariyang, the Phakey and the Khant gave somewhat differing lists of the traditional divisions of the day. These are enumerated in Table 5. In a nineteenth century account of the Assamese Khant language it is

TABLE 5
THE ASSAMESE TAI AND DIVISIONS OF THE DAY

Khariyang	Phakey	Khant	Moment of time
Ka, khan			Each row
Wan oak	Hu mueng laeng	Hu mueng heng	Just before dawn
(Kuang) Loe	Kham noet	(Kuang) Wan khuen	Dawn
	Wan nguai	Kang loe	Early morning
Ban ting	Wan ting	Wan teng	Morning
Ban chai	Wan sai	Wan chai	Midday
Ban tok		Wan tok	Afternoon
Nap sing	Pai kham	Pang kham	Sunset
Kuang khuen	Kang kham	Kang khuen	Evening
Ting khuen	Ting khuen	Teng khuen	Night time
			Midnight

⁴ R. Davis, "The Northern Thai Calendar and Its Uses," *Archipel*, Volume 7, 1976, p. 24. Another interesting variant has been noted in a group in the southernmost reaches of the Tai culture, the "Sam Sam" peoples in the southern part of the Malay Peninsula. See Ch. Archambault, *Enquête préliminaire sur les populations*

Sam Sam de Kedah et Peris (*Malaisie*, *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient*, Volume 42, X, Paris, 1959, p. 67).
⁵ Y. Loubie, *Tai de l'Indochine et programmes*, Ngah (*Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient*, Volume XXXVIII, 1938, p. 299).

stated that the day is divided into *cat* and *mo*, the *mo* probably meaning "period" or "time". Each of these *cat* was given a Tai numeral beginning with *mo* (*mo* = first period), *sa* (*sa* = second period) and ending with *pa* (*pa* = third period). The first *cat* was *sa* (*sa* = first period), *mo* (*mo* = second period), *pa* (*pa* = third period). It is noted that a *ka* is a unit of time (though that *ka* is a unit of time is not indicated) and that the *ka* is a unit of time (though that *ka* is a unit of time is not indicated) and that the *ka* is a unit of time (though that *ka* is a unit of time is not indicated).

TABLE 6
THE SHAN DECIMAL AND DUODECIMAL SERIES

Decimal series

Kap, Dap, Rai, Mung, Piek, Kai, Khat, Rung, Taw, Kaa

Duodecimal series

Saw, Plaw, Ng, Mau, Si, Siu, Singa, Mui, San, Raw, Mit, Kiu

The Shan

The use of a sexagesary cycle made up of a decimal and a duodecimal series of numbers has been reported for the Shan of upper Burma in general.¹ The whole sixty-year cycle would not be repeated here; it suffices to present, in Table 6, the two subsidiary series. The first year of the Shan cycle, Kap Saw, undoubtedly corresponds with the Pakaey Kap Caw and the Ahom year Kap Saw.

Amongst the Shan the lunar month is the basic unit in the division of the year. The shortfall between twelve lunar months and the length of the solar year is regular, adjusted so that the first lunar month begins in November. Further details, such as the exact length of each of the twelve months and the method used in adjusting to the solar year have not been found in the available literature. There is a summary account of traditional Shan divisions of the day, unfortunately only in English and omitting the equivalent Shan expressions, which is presented in Table 7.

TABLE 7
SHAN DIVISIONS OF THE DAY

First cock-crowing time <i>Sa</i> (<i>sa</i> = first period)	Soon after three a.m. <i>sa</i> (<i>sa</i> = first period)
Paody pounding time	Immediately before dawn
Early rice-eating	About eight a.m.
Rice eating	About noon
Evening eating	Eight p.m. or later

¹ J. F. Neechan, *The Shan calendar*, in *The Shan States*, Part I, Vol. 1, and J. Rangan, *The Tai Shan States*, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of India*, 1906, Government Printing, Burma, 1894, p. 211.

² J. G. Scott and J. F. Hardiman (compilers), *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and* *Lower Burma*, London, 1906, p. 119 and p. 121.

The Lue

Very little information on the Lue calendar has been encountered in the ethnographic literature which was scanned. The only remark useful to this study is the fact that the Lue calendar is one month ahead of that of the Lao, the eleventh Lao month corresponding with the twelfth of the Lue.¹⁰

The Yuan

In Yuan records there is abundant evidence of a sixty-year cycle. Like the sexagenary cycles described above, it is made up of a decimal and a duodecimal set of names.¹¹ They are given in Table 8. In this table the duodecimal series is provided with a list of twelve animal names. These animal names are believed to correspond with the duodecimal series. They may not be regarded as translations of words for each of these animals is known in Yuan language with a different Tai name. The list corresponds, with the exception of the twelfth (elephant) with the well known cycle of twelve animals known throughout China and Southeast Asia. The Yuan cycle, just as the ones encountered before, begins with a Kaap Cha year. Accounts that the sixty-year cycle of Chiang Mai begins with the Kat Cha year¹² rest upon a misunderstanding of the nature of the Yuan cycle and they may safely be ignored.¹³ The change from one year in the cycle to another is taken to fall at the moment of the "Indian" New Year in April. In 1980 the Yuan cycle reaches the year Kot Saa, the fifty-seventh of the sequence.

TABLE 8
THE YUAN DECIMAL AND DUODECIMAL SERIES

Decimal series	Duodecimal series	
Kaap	Chai	(rat)
Dap	Pao	(ox)
Lwayy	Nyi	(tiger)
Mueung	Maq	(rabbit)
Pock	Sil	(dragon)
Kat	Sat	(snake)
Kot	Sangas	(horse)
Luang	Met	(goat)
Tao	San	(monkey)
Kaa	Lao	(chicken)
	Sci	(dog)
	Kai	(elephant)

The Yuan reckon in lunar months, each month being divided into a waxing and a waning half. The first month of the Yuan corresponds with the twelfth month of the Lue and the Shan, and in this respect their calendar

¹⁰ H. Deydier, *Lokupala*, p. 98.

¹¹ C. Norton, *Annales de Siam*, Volume I, p. 70, S. Egerod, "The Eighth Earthly Branch in Archaic Chinese and Tai", *Oriens*, Volume 10, No. 2, 1957, pp. 296-7. R. Davis, "The Northern Thai Calendar and Its Uses", pp. 12-3.

¹² See, for example, C. Norton, *Annales*

de Siam, Volume I, p. 77, and R. Davis, "The Northern Thai Calendar and Its Uses", p. 5.

¹³ For a detailed explanation see M. Vickery, "The Lion Prince and Related Remarks on Northern History", *Journal of the Siam Society*, Volume 64, Pt. 3, 1976, pp. 342-43.

appears twice in the cycle, the first time in the first lunar month, the second time in the ninth lunar month. The first month has thirty days, the second month has twenty-nine days, the third month has thirty days, the fourth month has twenty-nine days, the fifth month has thirty days, the sixth month has twenty-nine days, the seventh month has thirty days, the eighth month has twenty-nine days, the ninth month has thirty days, the tenth month has twenty-nine days, the eleventh month has thirty days, and the twelfth month has thirty days. The first three months of the cycle are the first three months of the solar year, and the last three months of the cycle are the last three months of the solar year. Moreover, since the solar year is longer than the lunar year by some eleven days, occasionally a leap month is added. In the system used by the Yuan, this leap month occurs sometimes every nineteen years. The month chosen for duplication is always the ninth lunar month.

The *lunar* combination of names used to indicate years is also used by the Yuan to count a lengthy week of sixty days. The system has not yet been fully tested, but it is possible to indicate modern days using this cycle. January 1, 1980 thus corresponds with a Yuan Mueang Sai day, or a fifty-fourth day of the Yuan cycle.¹⁰

The Siamese

The first recorded Siamese system of counting years, other than eras derived from Indian time-reckoning, is the duodecimal cycle. It can be found even in the earliest inscription in Siamese script, that of King Rama Kienphaeng, dated 1227. The list of twelve names is presented in Table 9. This series represents a list of names which differs completely from those recorded in the duodecimal cycles of the Yuan, the Shan, the Phakey and the Ahom, though their meaning apparently goes back to the same well-known cycle of twelve animals. Again, however, these names do not represent the ordinary Tai words for these animals and they appear to be of foreign origin.

TABLE 9
THE SIAM-SE DUODECTMAL CYCLE

Name	Association	Name	Association
Cheat	Rat	Mamia	Horse
Chakou	Ox	Mamae	Goat
Khaan	Tiger	Wook	Monkey
Thoo	Hare	Rakaa	Cock
Marong	Dragon	Cog	Dog
Maseng	Snake	Kun	Pig

In the later half of the fifteenth century Siamese inscriptions occasionally contain references to a sixty-year cycle as described above for the Yuan.¹¹

¹⁰ Davis, "The Northern Thai Calendar and Its Uses", p. 5.

¹¹ R. LeMay, *An Asian Arcady, the Land and Peoples of Northern Siam*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1927, p. 161.

¹² The synodic month lasts twenty-nine days, twelve hours, forty-four minutes and three seconds, so that in a year this calendar

would lag just over one hour behind the actual lunation.

¹³ Calculated from the date given in Davis, p. 17.

¹⁴ R. Billard, "Les cycles chronographiques choisis dans les inscriptions thaïes", *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient*, Volume LI, 1963, p. 404.

By the seventeenth century it, however, a different sixty-year cycle had come in vogue.¹⁸ Unlike the time-reckoning with the sexagenary cycle described above, in this Siamese system the series of twelve names now forms the first part of the year name. Moreover, the names of the years displaced by the old cycle are not the sequence Chai, Pa, Nya, Ma, etc., but the list given in Table 9. A further difference with the sexagenary cycles encountered thus far is the fact that the decimal series is a series of numerical terms, derived from the Pali language. The decimal series is given in Table 10. Just like the other sexagenary systems mentioned above, the duodecimal series is repeated five times, and the decimal list six times before a new cycle begins.¹⁹

TABLE 10
THE DECIMAL SERIES IN THE SIAMSE SEXAGENARY SYSTEM

Ekasok	(first year)	Chipsok	(sixth year)
Dosok	(second year)	Sapsok	(seventh year)
Tasok	(third year)	Asok	(eighth year)
Pha wasok	(fourth year)	Nasok	(ninth year)
Pantyasok	(fifth year)	Sasasasok	(tenth year)

With respect to the Siamese subdivisions of the year, the lunar month is again the basic unit. The Siamese first month begins usually in December. Apart from the first month and the second, which are respectively known as the Aat month and the Yui month, all months are numbered with ordinary Siamese numerals. The words Aat and Yui apparently are derived from the same southern-Chinese counting system which is used in kin-numbering, described in Volume I. The odd-numbered months have twenty-nine days, whilst the even months are thirty days long. Each lunar month is divided into two halves, a waning half *waning khuen* and a waxing half *khuen raem*. In the odd-numbered months the waning half is reduced by a day to fourteen days. When an extra day is needed to catch up in order to catch up with the actual duration once every four, five, or six years, this day is given to the seventh month,²⁰ making it a month of thirty days. In order to adjust the lunar calendar to the solar one, seven intercalary months are added every nineteen years. This intercalary month is always added to the eighth, and it may be called the "weight-month" *raduan song phat*. The lunar calendar is still in use in the rural Siamese countryside, where people can make an appointment to meet each other, for example, on the fourth day of waning moon (*van raem ut khun*) or on the fifteenth day of waxing moon (*wan khuen sip haa khun*).

¹⁸ S. de la Loubère (*The Kingdom of Siam*, Oxford in Asia Historical Reprints, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 169) had understood the duodecimal series, but had not grasped its combination with a decimal series to form a sixty-year cycle. He reports that to the words Chalun and Thoo the word Sapsok is added "which I understand not, and which was added to the names of the twelfth of the years, which run then to distinguish it from the four

other twelfths of the years of the same cycle" (*ibid.*).

¹⁹ The Siamese sexagenary cycle has been described in some detail by Pallegoix, *Description du royaume thaï au Siam*, Volume I, pp. 253-55, and O. Frankfurter, *Elements of Siamese Grammar*, Leipzig: Hiersmann, 1900, pp. 137-41.

²⁰ *Hongkewek Calendar*, Bangkok: American Missionary Association, 1862, p. 28.

The Lao

The Laotian calendar contains a sexagenary cycle made up of a series of ten names repeated six times and a series of twelve repeated five times in the manner described for the Annam, the Pukkey, the Shan and the Yuan.⁸⁰ The two series are presented in Table I. No definite information has been found on the question at what moment in the year the name used to change to a following one in the sixty year cycle. In recent centuries it seems that the beginning of the Indian astronomical year in April also served as the beginning of a year in the sexagenary cycle. More recently the beginning of the international year at January 1 has been adopted. The year 1980, according to the Lao sixty year cycle is a Ket San year, the fifty-seventh of the series.

TABLE II
THE LAO DECIMAL AND DUODECIMAL SERIES

Decimal series	Duodecimal series	
Kap	Chen	(rat)
Hap	Pao	(ox)
Hual	Nyi	(tiger)
Muang	Mao	(hare)
Puek	Si	(snake-serpent)
Kat	Seu	(snake)
Kot	Sanga	(horse)
Huang	Mot	(goat)
Tao	San	(monkey)
Ka	Hao	(cock)
	Set	(dog)
	Kheu	(pig)

The Laotian month is lunar. The year has alternating months of twenty-nine and thirty days; the even-numbered months carrying thirty days. The first two months have names, respectively, Chuen month and Ngi month; all the other months carry ordinary Tai numerals from three to twelve. The word Chuen is believed to stand for 'early'. The word Ngi corresponds with 'two' in the southern Chinese counting system mentioned earlier. The beginning of the first lunar month falls between November 4 and December 12. Like the Siamese calendar, the seventh month occasionally receives an extra day so as to make up for the difference between month and actual duration. In order to adjust the difference between twelve lunar months and the solar year, intercalary months are added from time to time. Again like the Siamese case, this intercalary month always falls inmediately after an eighth month of the year and it is called 'twice eighth month' or *Chuen-pact-ue-ue-ue*. The months are each divided in fifteen days waxing and fourteen or fifteen days waning moon.

⁸⁰ Tao Maha Indala Phetsarath, 'The Lao-Lan calendar', *Kingdom of Laos Yearbook*, Vol. 1, 1959, pp. 100-103, I. Merdat, 'La nouvelle année laotienne', *Bulletin de la Société des Etudes Indochinoises*, N.S. p. 102. Volume XVI, 1941, pp. 10-11 and Theo. Bonn Souk, 'Nouvel calendrier', *Revue de l'Asie Indochinoise*, Vol. 1, 1959, pp. 133-35. "Phetsarath, 'The Lao-Lan Calendar'.

The Laotians also knew the solar cycle with its sixty same sixty combinations of names as in the solar names discussed in Table 11. An item of information which is not known but of great interest in the light of the findings amongst the Paks is that the Laotians of the nominal series of Table 11 to indicate a regular five-day week in the nominal series, every *Hua* (third) day and every *Huang* (fourth) day was a rest day. This is related to the fact that every fifth day used to be a market day.²⁰

Whilst in Olden Siam there were *roups* or "watches" of three hours each in the Laotian countryside the "watch" is called *nyam* and is a half that length, or one-and-a-half hours. There are four periods in the day, each made up of four *nyams*, namely the period between sunrise (*thung*) to noon (*theng*), from noon until evening (*kham*), from evening to midnight (*thung kham*), and from midnight to sunrise. The names of these sixteen watches are presented²⁰ in Table 12.

TABLE 12
THE LAOTIAN NYAMS

From sunrise to noon	From dusk to midnight
(1) Tuttang	(9) Tuttang
(2) Nga	(10) Dusk
(3) Thue koo theng	(11) Thue koo theng
(4) Thue ng	(12) Thung kham
From noon to dusk	From midnight to sunrise
(5) Tutsai	(13) Tutsai
(6) Leng	(14) Khua
(7) Thue koo kham	(15) Thue koo hung
(8) Phat lan	(16) Phat lan

Lao astrologers use an elaborate and very accurate system of subdivisions of the day. The smallest unit is an *apen* which is equivalent to two-fifth of a second, ten *apen* form a *praem*, six *praem* a *wanathu*, fifteen *wanathu* a *huat*, and four *huat* one *nathu*. The *huat* is therefore equivalent to six minutes of the international system and the same as the Siamese *huat* mentioned above. The *nathu* is one-sixth of a twenty-four hour day.

The Tai Neua

Only a few scattered remarks have been found on Neua time-reckoning. When Bourlet mentions that an event occurs in the third month²⁰ it may be inferred that they share the system of giving the months a number. Of great interest is the remark that the Neua have a rest day every five days, and that no travel is permitted on such a day.²¹ Bourlet does not reveal with what system this five-day week is counted.

Regarding the smaller units of time more details are available. The Neua appear to use fourteen separate periods in a day, and these are enumerated in Table 13.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

²⁰ Bourlet, "Les Thays", p. 632.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 99; and Thao Boun-Souk,

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 625.

"Notre calendrier", p. 144.

TABLE 13
THE TAI NEUA DIVISIONS OF THE DAY

Name	Equivalent	Name	Equivalent
(1) Ka kai	Cock's crow	(8) Khung pan	About 4 p.m.
(2) Khung bang	Sunrise	(9) Dan mat	Dusk
(3) Ko so	Daylight	(10) Chat Chao	Evening
(4) Ko det	About 8-9 a.m.	(11) Khao nam	"Curfew"
(5) Ko ka	About 11 a.m.	(12) S. . .	exp. exp.
(6) Ka ngai	Midday	(13) Dai dot	Midnight
(7) Khung tuang	About 2 p.m.	(14) Lai la	Before cock's crow

The Black Tai and the White Tai

No references to eras or year cycles were encountered in the available literature on these groups. With respect to the beginning of a year the evidence shows considerable variation in the moment upon which the first month commences. Reporting for both the Black and the White Tai Maspéro states that their first month falls in July-August.³² However Deydier, writing about one group of White Tai mentions that their seventh month falls in September-October from which it can be seen that their first month must fall in November-December at the same time as that of the Siamese and the Laotians.³³

From some of the published Black Tai manuscripts it is clear that the Black Tai know of a sexagesimal week which is made up of a decimal and a duodecimal set of names. Unfortunately the decimal set of names has not been published but the duodecimal set is as follows: Chao, Pau, Nyi, Mai, S, Sai, Sangaa, Mot, San, Ha, Met and Kao.³⁴

TABLE 14
THE BLACK TAI DIVISIONS OF THE DAY

Name	Association	Equivalent
Koyu kai	Chao	Before cock's crow
Kai khan	Pau	Cock's crow
Tuan chau	—	Rising sun
Chan hung	Nyi	Daybreak
Nuang ngai	Mao	Morning cooking
Kin ngai	Si	Morning meal
Pak pom	Sao	Communal rest
Tiang van	Sangaa	Midday
Ngai chai	Mot	Declining sun
Nuang leang	San	Prepare evening meal
Pei ka tpu huang	Ha	Dusk and low moon
Muet	—	Late
Muet tiang	Mot	Dark
Tiang cuen	Kao	Midnight

³² H. Maspéro, *Mélanges posthumes sur les religions et l'histoire de la Chine* 4^e année I, Les religions chinoises, Publications du Musée Guimet, Bibliothèque de Diffusion, Volume LVII, Paris: Civilisations du Sud, 1950, p. 175 and his "Mœurs et coutumes des populations sauvages", *Un empire colonial français* (edited by G. Maspéro, Paris: Van Oest, 1929, p. 2.

³³ Deydier, *Lokapala*, p. 233.

³⁴ Y. Laubie, "Tablette divinitaire et idéogrammes à Ngra-lo", p. 398.

The *đuê* (lunar) set of names is sometimes linked with a series of expressions dividing the day. However, several other moments of the day not relating to the *đuê* calendar system are also known²² and these are shown in Table 14.

The Red Tai

The R. J. Tai first month must fall at a certain point of the year, not very dissimilar from that of the L. J. Tai or S. J. Tai. This can be inferred from the fact that the time of the rice field "takes place" in the sixth month and that by the eighth month the rice plants have grown to such a size that the "evening" of "gathering of the rice leaves" can take place.²³ The months are lunar and are reported to follow the *sing-anna-de* system. Robert has published an extensive list of divisions of the day²⁴ and these are presented in Table 15.

TABLE 15
THE RED TAI DIVISIONS OF THE DAY

Name	Equivalent
Ka-khāi-mā	First cock's crow, about 1 a.m.
Ka-khāi-sāng	Second cock's crow, about 3 a.m.
Ka-khāi-sāu	Third cock's crow, about 4.30 a.m.
Ka-khāi-sā	Fourth cock's crow, about 5 a.m.
Ka-khāi-sān	Continuous cock's crow
Hung-fup	Faint daylight
Ta-nghāi-khuen	Sunrise
Du-ducung	Bright sunlight
Du-ka	"Ripe" or full sun
Pu-khāi-ke	Buffalo grazing, after first work
Pu-ka	Grazing after harrowing, 9 a.m.
Ch-pang	Breakfast, around 10 a.m.
Pom-pa	Shortened shadow
Chau-ka	One walks on his own shadow
Teng-ng-m	Midday
Se-ka	Early afternoon, 2-3 p.m.
Ka-ke-daf-chāi-khāi	"Ripe" afternoon, slanting sun on
Ch-pang-māi-cung	Rice cooking, about 5 p.m.
Ka-ka-pu-ka	Feeding the pigs, ducks and fowls
Chāi-chāi-m	Dark
Chāi-pau-māi-m	Dinner time for the "small" men
Chap-pau-huon-luong	Dinner time for the rich
Chap-pu-ia	Time for a stroll
Chap-khau-muāi-non	Time to return home to sleep
Luck-hung	Very late
Teng-hung-non-dai-tuen	Having slept one may wake up
Teng-khuen	Midnight

Apart from the information on moments of time which will be discussed at the end of this chapter, such a list provides most interesting expressions for those familiar with one or more of the other Tai languages. Someone with a knowledge of S. J. Tai can understand most of the Red Tai entries: "Ka-khāi-mā" is "cock's crow" in both vernaculars; "Hung-fup" may be the S. J. Tai *hung-fau* or "rising dawn"; "Ta-nghāi-khuen" is no doubt the same as 'tawn khuen', i.e. 'the sun goes up'. Incidentally the attested R. J. Tai *ta-nghāi* is further proof

²² *Ibid.*, p. 299.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

²⁴ Robert, *Notes sur les Tay Deng*, p. 80.

for the idea that the word *tawan* is derived from *tua* and *wan*, the "eye" of the day just like the Malay "Det haring" is the Siamese "dact rancang" or "shining sunlight". The Red Tai and the Siamese have not been in contact in historical times and the fact that such lists are almost invariably native intelligence is a strong argument in favour of the existence of a homogeneous Tai culture at the end of the first millennium A.D.

The Diol

The Diol calendar has twelve months, there are twelve day weeks, the days have twelve hours and each hour is divided into twelve parts. Each of these divisions in twelve equal parts may be designated with the help of a cycle of twelve names. These are: Chaea (rat), Piao (ox), Nyein (tiger), Mao (hare), Chi (dragon), Sea (snake), Sa (horse), Fat (goat), San (ape), Tho (cock), Seat (dog) and Kaeu (pig).²⁹ The months are reported to be thirty days in length. No further details are available in the literature.

The Tho

The Tho calendar is heavily influenced by that of the Vietnamese. The month of February has been adopted as the beginning of the New Year, just like the Vietnamese, and the Tho have also accepted Vietnamese eras and year names. The Tho months have twenty nine and thirty days. The name of the first month is Chie e for all the other months carry Tai numerals. The days of each month are also counted in Tai numerals.³⁰

OVERVIEW

a) The sexagenary cycle

The common sixty year cycle made up of combinations of a denary and a quaternary year cycle has been encountered amongst six different Tai groups (Ahom, Phakey, Shan, Yuan, Siamese and Laotians). In Table I both the cycles from the two sub cycles are placed next to one another, together with lists obtained from sexagesimal "weeks" from some other Tai groups. The Siamese year cycle has been placed at the side because it deviates considerably from all the others and because it has been pointed out that it is atypical cycle of relatively recent introduction. For the sixty-day "week" the Siamese also have made use of a "Yuan"-type set of names. There can be no doubt as to the fact that the system goes back a considerable time for it has been used even in the early parts of the Ahom Burang's which go back to before the first century A.D. The fact that the sixty year cycle is used amongst Tai peoples who have lost contact since the early spread of over mainland Southeast Asia makes it clear that it may safely be regarded as part of the Ancient Tai culture.

The sexagenary cycle is an interesting case for the cultural historian in that it shows both considerable similarities and some local deviations. The

²⁹ J. Esquirol and G. Williatte, *Essai de description du Tonkin*, Paris: Maisonneuve Freres, 1908, p. xxvii.

³⁰ E. Diquet, *Etude de la langue Tho*, Paris: A. Crabance, 1910, pp. 47-48.

TABLE 16
THE DECIMAL AND DUODECIMAL SERIES AMONGST TAI PEOPLES

	Ahom	Phakey	Shan	Yuan	Lao	Black Tai	Dhol	Siamese
D	Kap	Kap	Kap	Kaap	Kap			Ek k
E	Dap	Nap	Dap	Dap	Hap			It k
C	Ra	Hu	Ra	Lwaay	Hui			T k
I	Mung	Muong	Mung	Mueang	Muong			T k kasi k
M	Puak	Puek	Piek	Puek	Puek			T k k k
A	Kat	Kat	Kat	Kat	Kat			Ch k
L	Khut	Khut	Khut	Kot	Kot			S k
	Rung	Hung	Rung	Luang	Huang			A k
	Taw	Tao	Taw	Tao	Tao			S k k
	Ka	Ka	Ka	Ka	Ka			Su k net mok
D	Saew	Cau	Saw	Chai	Chou	Chao	Chieu	Chau
U	Plow	Pao	Plaw	Pao	Pao	Pau	Piao	C au
O	Ng	Ng	Ng	Nyi	Nyi	Nyi	Nyio	Khaan
D	Miao	Miao	Mau	Mao	Mao	Mao	Mao	T o
I	Si	Si	Si	Si	Si	Si	Chi	M rong
E	Chow	Sau	Su	Su	Sei	Sao	Seu	M seing
C	S gu	S gu	S gu	S gu	S gu	S gu	Sa	M rha
I	Mat	Met	Met	Met	Met	Mot	Fai	M ng
M	San	San	San	San	San	San	Sao	W k
A	Rao	Hao	Raw	Lao	Hao	Hao	Tho	K kan
L	Mit	Mit	Mit	Set	Set	Met	Seut	C
	Kaew	Ka	Kiu	Kai	Kheu	Kuo	Kaep	Kia

most striking similarities can be read in the lists of names tabulated in Table 6. Some of the names, such as the sixth name in the decimal series, and the ninth name in the duodecimal one are identical for all Tai groups where the lists have been recorded. And others are recognisably related to each other. In all the variants of the Tai sixty-year cycle, the names from the denary series form the "parent" or first part, and names from the duodecimal series a "suffix" (p. 40). In all cases the suffix is distributed uniformly to form the first year of the cycle. It may safely be assumed that a Tai who lived at the end of the first millennium A.D. wished to refer to the sixteenth year of the cycle would say "Kat Mu". In time will probably be able to reconstruct most, if not all, of the combinations of names for the Ancient Tai.

One of the most interesting aspects of local chronology recorded in this chapter concerns the actual year which is regarded as the first in a cycle. The Ahom are clearly at variance with the other groups for whom the cycle has been determined. Whilst according to the Ahom 1980 is Dap Mut or the thirty-second year of the cycle, it is Kat San or the fifty-seventh year to the Yuan and to the Laotians. This difference of fully twenty-five years is probably a good measure of the early cultural separation of the Ahom from other Tai. If the Ahom appear to have adopted the complete sexagenary system long before they adopted their written system. When the *lakh* system became fixed into their written sources for the first time, they seem to have had no method of checking with other Tai groups and adopted quite a different "original year" from where to begin the cycle.

* Phetsarath calls it the "mother name" (*Calendar**, p. 100) and the "child name"; "The Laotian

Among the Phakeys, the Yama, the Sanyasi, the Fakirs and the Black Tai is also a strong evidence for the venerable age of the system.

As a result of their long and part-time Tai calendar before the branching out over Sikkim, Assam, Tibet, etc., the isolated and different groups, the various sects and day cycles are not uniform and confusing. In the Ahom calendar for the first day of January 1880 is reckoned to be a Ka Phaw Day or the first day of a sexagesimal cycle. In the Yama calendar, however, the same day is reckoned to be a Mid-year Saturday or the fifth day of the cycle.⁴¹ Then the Sanyasi sect in a Black Country has the twentieth day of the cycle.⁴² The Phakeys again refer to the first day of the day cycle as the first day of the year cycle, and the Phakeys, they must already have used this counting system before they used the new calendar as at long.

d) The ten-day and five-day week

The following notes presented above have no doubt that the Phakeys have used a ten-day week, and that the days of the ten-day series are the ten days from the sexagesimal cycle. It has been argued that the Phakeys have adopted the ten-day week from the sequence of ten days of the ten-day series. These independent strands of information may be taken as evidence for an Ancient Tai ten-day week. Once it is realised that the days were known as a Ka Phaw Day (the New Day), it is clear why the sexagesimal cycle always begins first in the community with the Jan Phaw Day. The ten-day week is the basic unit of time in which the twelve-day series is grafted in order to form the sexagesimal cycle.

This ten-day week must have been an important aspect of the reckoning not only for a few astrologers intrigued by the regularities in and them, but for the average Tai person. It is argued here that every day Tai once knew which day of the ten-day week it was, because the twelve-day series was divided into two halves, every fifth day forming a 'sacred day' a day during which no work was done in the fields.

Evidence for the rest day every fifth day, which reinforces the argument regarding the importance of the ten-day sequence, comes in three places from three sources, and also there is some corroborating evidence in astronomical tables. The first line of evidence is the fact that the Phakeys in Assam, and remember that the second series of days contained two rest days or sacred days, doing which certain prohibited activities were forbidden. The second and strongest evidence is the tradition that traditionally the Tai people used to halt work every Hing day and every Hing day, respectively the third and the tenth of the ten-day series, and that I went back to the time that every fifth day used to be marked. The third account comes from the Tai Naga amongst whom it is reported that they have a sacred day or rest day every five days. These three independent reports, together with the evidence for the twelve-day series, and together with the fact that all their weeks have been found to be Tai amongst Tai peoples, other than the relatively recent seven-day week, suffice to make a case for the existence and importance of an Ancient Tai ten-day week.

⁴¹This has been extrapolated from the date given by R. Davis, "The Northern Tai Calendar and Its Uses", p. 17.

⁴²Calculated from tables given in R. Bilard, "Les cycles chronographiques chinois", pp. 414-43.

Some corroborating evidence may be found in one of the traditional diagrams used to forecast auspicious and inauspicious moments. In an earlier publication I have represented and described in some detail what I then taken to be one of the most widespread variations of this diagram.⁴³ It consists of a 5x7 grid of thirty-five squares, called 'ubaukpong' diagram. Its basic shape is reproduced in Figure 1. The diagram lists a days of the week and provides seven day-five periods (for simplicity's sake named A, B, C, D and E). These five periods are given with great astronomical exactitude in the Samese version: period A lasting from 6.00 a.m. until 8.34 a.m., period B from 8.35 a.m. until 10.45 a.m. and so forth reaching 6 p.m. at the end of period F. The same sequence may be used to divide the night. When a Samese wishes to check whether or not a certain time is auspicious, he checks on what day of the week it falls and reads across the diagram through the five cycles of symbols and determines which symbol fits with his chosen time. The results are a very auspicious sign (a dot), is mildly auspicious (one dot), slightly inauspicious (a blank square), is neither auspicious nor inauspicious and a cross is, perfectly inauspicious and ominous.

	A	B	C	D	E
Sunday	••	×		••	•
Monday	•	••	×		••
Tuesday	••	•	••	×	
Wednesday		••	•	••	×
Thursday	×		••	•	••
Friday	••	×		••	•
Saturday	•	••	×		••
	A	B	C	D	E

FIG. 1. The Samese "ubaukpong"

The same chart has been described for northern Laos.⁴⁴ It contains thirty-five squares, recognises five periods when reading from left to right and vertically mentions the seven days of the week, starting with Sunday. The symbols and their meanings are identical and the positions of the dots and crosses in the chart is also the same.⁴⁵ Even the name of the diagram corresponds with that of Samese: the Laotian characters read 'vauk' or

⁴³ B. J. Terwiel, *Monks and Magic*, p. 156.

⁴⁴ Pham Cong Sou, "Line can be divination du nord Laos", *Bulletin de l'Association Royale Lao*, Volume 6, 1971, pp. 160-64.

⁴⁵ In the diagram presented by Pham Cong Sou four inauspicious periods are left blank. This must be an accidental omission, as the Lao version of the diagram has no blank squares. See Pham Cong Sou, *op. cit.* p. 166.

hauk ng" which Phan Ching Sui translates as 'the auspicious and inauspicious watches'. There is a subtle difference between the Siamese and the Laotian diagrams regarding the time divisions. Whilst the Siamese have written out the five divisions of twelve hours, using the international clock, the Laotian examination uses five letters, namely, *Ch*, "5 a.m.", "8 a.m.", and "Y" which stand for *chao*, i.e. 'morning', *soay*, or 'late morning', *thieng*, "midday", *haay*, "afternoon" and *yen*, "late afternoon". Local Laotians in Laos state that, as, like Siam, the intervals can also be related to the night, and that the five periods then correspond with "evening", "night", "morning", "mid-time between 10.30 a.m. and 4 a.m." and "the time between 4 a.m. and 5 a.m.".

A close examination of both diagrams presents a few puzzling aspects. In the first place the division of the day into five periods does not readily fit into the traditional Fux system of dividing these periods. Both the Siamese and the Laotian systems seem to have 'squeezed', each in their own way, to accommodate the five. A division into four, or eight would have suited the well-known system of 'watches' much better. The second puzzling aspect is that the rows of symbols are ordered in such a manner that for the first five days of the week each particular period of time has a different value for each day, but Friday is a repeat of Sunday and Saturday gives the same results as Monday. This presents a certain imbalance which is of character with other Laotian charts of the region.

These problems, as we shall see, disappear with the examination of a slightly varying form of the diagram which is associated with northern Laos and⁴⁰ which is here reproduced in Figure 2. A comparison between Figure 1 and Figure 2 leaves no doubt as to the fact that the two diagrams are related. The one of Figure 2 is also useful to reveal the conspicuousness or inauspiciousness of moments in the weeklies. However, since there are only five horizontal lines, the person who consults the diagram is advised to use the first line for both Sunday and Friday, the second line for Tuesday, the third for Saturday, the fourth for Monday and Wednesday and the last line for Thursday. Whilst the second type of diagram appears much neater than that of thirty-five squares, it that it does not repeatedly 'lines of auspicious and inauspicious symbols' it apparently presents no difficulties regarding fitting in every weekday into the five available slots.

Sunday Friday	☉	☿		☽	☿
Tuesday	☿	☉	☿		☽
Saturday	☽	☿	☉	☿	
Monday Wednesday		☽	☿	☉	☿
Thursday	☿		☽	☿	☉

FIG. 2: A diagram from northern Laos

⁴⁰ P. Boudard, "A propos d'une charte Soan des études indochinoises NS, Volume hétéroscopique laotienne", *Bulletin de la* XXXII, 1957, pp. 377-83.

Siamese *thung*, Lantian *thung*, Black Tai *tung* and Red Tai *tueng* are all related and these point to an Ancient Tai word for 'midday'. Similarly it can be argued that the Ancient Tai word for 'morning' was the word for "noon" (Tai word for the word for "noon" (Khamyang *thung kham*, Phakey *thung kham*, Khamyang *kham*, Siamese *thung kham* (also an early form of Black Tai *theng cuen* and Red Tai *theng khuen*)).

General words indicating morning time often have the word *ngat* or *ngat* in common (Ahom: Phakey, La, Black Tai, Red Tai). This word *ngat* also occurs in Siamese with the meaning of 'morning', 'daylight' and amongst the Tai of southern Thailand it indicates specifically the first period of the morning from sunrise till about 9 a.m.⁴⁰ In this manner a list of Tai names divide the day in moments and periods, excluding a reference to regular human and animal activities can be set up. The Ancient Tai began the day with sunrise (*thung* *ngat*) then all went on working (*ngat* *ngat*) but they also had a word covering the whole period between sunrise and noon (*khut*). A fixed moment in the day was noon (*thung* *theng* *thung* *thung* *thung* *thung*) followed by the afternoon (*thung* *thung* *thung*) and dusk (*thung*). The whole period of daylight was known with a word related to *thung* *thung* *thung* *thung* *thung* and *ngat* and the whole period of darkness was probably related to a word such as *kham*.

In the many lists of divisions of the day now widespread pattern reveal not a more exact and regular division of the day could be found. It is quite possible that the Ancient Tai knew "hours", or "watches", but the description of these exact subdivisions thus far remains limited to the Siamese and the Laotians does not warrant their inclusion in the Ancient Tai method of time-reckoning.

⁴⁰ McFarland, *Thai-English Dictionary*, p. 223.

THE ANCIENT TAI CALENDAR IN WHICH PERIODS OF FIVE

After the survey of the available material on Tai methods of time reckoning, the next task in the present project is to survey the literature recording the peoples' traditional Tai calendar. As before, it is not intended here to provide a detailed survey of the Indian, the Burmese, the Chinese, the Vietnamese, the Cambodian and the Siamese calendars, but of the aspects of their systems which concern the Chinese calendar. This section is guided by the findings of the previous chapter. For example, since there has been no reason to presume that any of the traditional Tai or Sino-Tai eras all references to ancient eras are not strictly in a date. However, because a sexagenary cycle has been established as a calendar of Tai and Tai-Chinese populations, this sixty-year cycle features prominently in the chapter on the survey of literature first to survey the sexagenary cycle, the three sexagenary cycles of Tai are discussed for a further Tai and Tai-Chinese calendar system is mentioned to the solar year and the sexagenary cycle are some remarks on weeks, days and subdivisions of days.

SECTION 1

The sixty-year and the sixty-day cycles

a) *The Indian system*

In the Indian literature amongst the many references to periods of time longer than a year, there is occasionally a mention of a sixty-year cycle. It is established that this cycle was introduced during the sixth century A.D. but scholars disagree as to the time of its introduction in the Indian calendar.¹ It is often known as the Jovian cycle, it was originally based upon calculations from the Jovian revolution. Soon, however, the difference between solar year and Jovian's revolution was no longer neglected and the cycle lost its link with the planet Jupiter.² The sixty years in the Jovian cycle are known as sixty separate names. These Sanskrit names³ cannot be subdivided into series of ten or series of twelve. There seem to be no links between the Tai sexagenary cycle and the Indian one.

There is, in Indian time-reckoning sometimes mention of a unit of six years called *Shat* or 'season' but because there is no reason to suspect a link between it and the Tai sixty-day system.⁴

¹ R. Sewel and S. B. Dixit place the introduction of the cycle halfway the fourth century A.D. (*The Indian Calendar* London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1896, p. 36). A. Cunningham estimates that the Jovian cycle was introduced before the Christian era (*Book of Indian Eras with Tables for Calcu-*

lating Indian Dates, Varanasi: Indologica Book House, 1970, p. 18).

² A. Cunningham, *Book of Indian Eras*, p. 25 gives the full list.

³ L. D. Barnett, *Antiquities of India*, Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1964, p. 238.

b) *The Tibetan cycle*

The Tibetan sixty-year cycle is a well-known feature of that regional agricultural system which has been in use for a long time. Just like the Tal system, the Tibetan cycle consists of two series of years, the series of ten and the other of twelve. The first here repeats six times, the second six times, the first forming the beginning part of the year's name, the second forming the latter part. This far the Tibetan system appears identical to the Tal. There are, however, also some differences. The greatest difference lies in the composition of the series of ten names. They are in Tibetan and consist of only five terms, each term repeated twice. They are given in Table 17.

TABLE 17

THE TIBETAN SERIES OF TEN AND TWELVE NAMES

Decimal series (translated)

Wood, Wood, Fire, Fire, Earth, Earth, Metal, Metal, Water, Water

Duodecimal series (translated):

Rat, Ox, Tiger, Hare, Dragon, Serpent, Horse, Sheep, Ape, Bird, Dog, Pig

These are none other than the well-known "five agents" of the Chinese system of reckoning. Another difference with the Tal system is that the Tibetan cycle is reckoned to begin with a Fire Hare year, reputedly in the year 1027 A.D.⁴ while the Tal cycle begins with a combination of years equivalent to the Tibetan Wood Rat. According to the Tibetan way of reckoning, 1880 is a Hare year, the start of the sexagenary cycle which does not correspond with any of the 14 dates calculated thus far. Finally, the Tibetans use the system only to calculate years and do not extend the system to cover a set of sixty days.

Apparently the Tal and Tibetan systems are related, and both peoples have derived this aspect of their calendar from the same source. However, they diverge sufficiently, especially in the decenary sub-series, to warrant the conclusion that the Tibetans and the Tal did not adopt the system at the same time.

c) *Mon and early Burmese cycle*

From about the tenth century A.D. onward there is an occasional reference in Mon and later in Burmese sources which indicate the knowledge and use of a twelve-year cycle.⁵ The names of the twelve years are apparently derived from Pali names which originally belonged to lunar months and, therefore, there seems to be a link with the Tal calendar. In addition there is no ~~sur~~ of the use of a sexagenary cycle or of a sexagesimal days-week in Mon and Burmese inscriptions. The Mons, especially those

⁴ Further details can be found in B. Laufer, "The Application of the Tibetan Sexagenary Cycle", *T'ung Pao*, Volume XIV, 1913, p. 571.

⁵ J. S. Furnival, "The Cycle of Burmese

Year Names", *Journal of the Burma Research Society*, Volume XII, Pt. 2, 1922, p. 80, G. H. Luce, *Old Burma - Early Pagan*, Volume II, Locust Valley, 1923, August 1969, p. 330.

The Lamet know a sixty-day week, but do not use it for ordinary keeping track of the days. It is important only when they wish to calculate what day of the week is auspicious for a particular day. A third of the week is supposed to have taken the sixty names of the Lamet peoples to be set with the features of the culture. In Tib. 18 the calendar contains a list of names which could be extrapolated from the data given for these three minority groups.

TABLE 18
DECIMAL AND DUODECIMAL NAMES AMONGST
KHMU, P'U NOI AND LAMET

DECIMAL			DUODECIMAL		
Khmu	P'u Noi	Lamet	Khmu	P'u Noi	Lamet
Kap	Kap	Kap	Cho	Cho	Toeh
Rap	Hap	Rap	Plau	Pau	Plau
Rau		Rau	N	N	N
Muong	Muong	Muong	Mau	Mau	Mau
Hak	Puk	Puk	Si	Si	Si
Kat	Kat	Kat	S	S	S
Kat	Kat	Kat	S-ga	S-ga	S-ga
Ruong	Nuong	Rug	M	M	M
Tau	Tau	Tau	Sau	Sau	Sau
Ka	Ka	Ka	Rou	Hau	Rau
			Sot	Soi	Saci
			Go	Kho	Kuu h

1) The Chinese system

The Chinese have used a sexagesimal day cycle based upon a series of ten and twelve names since early times. The first half of the names in both the series probably came from the earliest Chinese. Chinese records on several occasions have been traced back to thousands of years before our era.¹² The series of ten names became known as the "ten heavenly stems" while the twelve names were described as the "twelve earthly branches".¹³ The ten stems were related to "five agents" in the context given in Tib. 10. The sexagesimal cycle was formed by combining the two series, names from the decimal sequence always being placed at the beginning and names from the duodecimal set at the end (hence the imagery of "stems" and "branches"). In Han times this sexagesimal cycle was used at least in the state of Szechuan, later, probably from the first century A.D. onwards, the system was extended to make a cycle of sixty years. The two series became the basis of an intricate system of time-keeping. The first two days of each season were designated for two specific days of the decimal series, each season commencing with a particular sexagesimal day. This gave rise to the system of the sexagesimal cycle, which gradually found its way to the Tibetan sexagenary system as well as to that of the Vietnamese as will be seen below. The "twelve earthly branches" became used to mark the

¹² K. G. Izikowitz, *Lamet Hill Peasants in French Indochina*, pp. 171-73.

¹³ Ho Ping-Ti, *The Cradle of the East*, Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1975, p. 236 ff.

¹⁴ W. Th. de Bary, Wing-tsh Chan and B. Watson (compilers), *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1960, pp. 221-2.

are clearly related to each other and derive from some common set of Chinese words, the different set of Tui were apparently different from the well-known Chinese set. (See Table 19.) The names of the first ten Tui have been recorded in Tables 6 and 18 above. From a very close examination of the set of names with an alphabet goes back to Arabic. The names may be assumed that these ten names are similar to the names with the Tui used when they adopted the sexagesimal system for the first time.

Two possibilities present themselves as explanations for the sexagesimal ten word. The first one is that the first ten Tui were the variants of the "ten heavenly stems" and that in the sexagesimal system they were taken into the sexagesimal system before the Tui were adopted in the system. The second explanation lies in the fact that in Chinese astrology the Tui have had a series of names related to the days of the week and that they could have been related with the Chinese names of the days. In order to form a complete system. The different names of the Tui, however, and other research, is needed to determine the exact nature of the series of ten.

g) The Hmong system

Although Savina is of the opinion that the Hmong do not possess a proper calendar,¹⁴ later on in his report on the Hmong at 136, he says that Nui Chindarsi reports that the Hmong have a calendar which is based on the division of the year and that the calendar is divided into twelve months each and a first, second, and third week. The first week is the first week of the month. The second week is the second week of the month. The third week is the third week of the month. The fourth week is the fourth week of the month. The fifth week is the fifth week of the month. The sixth week is the sixth week of the month. The seventh week is the seventh week of the month. The eighth week is the eighth week of the month. The ninth week is the ninth week of the month. The tenth week is the tenth week of the month. The eleventh week is the eleventh week of the month. The twelfth week is the twelfth week of the month. The thirteenth week is the thirteenth week of the month. The fourteenth week is the fourteenth week of the month. The fifteenth week is the fifteenth week of the month. The sixteenth week is the sixteenth week of the month. The seventeenth week is the seventeenth week of the month. The eighteenth week is the eighteenth week of the month. The nineteenth week is the nineteenth week of the month. The twentieth week is the twentieth week of the month. The twenty-first week is the twenty-first week of the month. The twenty-second week is the twenty-second week of the month. The twenty-third week is the twenty-third week of the month. The twenty-fourth week is the twenty-fourth week of the month. The twenty-fifth week is the twenty-fifth week of the month. The twenty-sixth week is the twenty-sixth week of the month. The twenty-seventh week is the twenty-seventh week of the month. The twenty-eighth week is the twenty-eighth week of the month. The twenty-ninth week is the twenty-ninth week of the month. The thirtieth week is the thirtieth week of the month. The thirty-first week is the thirty-first week of the month. The thirty-second week is the thirty-second week of the month. The thirty-third week is the thirty-third week of the month. The thirty-fourth week is the thirty-fourth week of the month. The thirty-fifth week is the thirty-fifth week of the month. The thirty-sixth week is the thirty-sixth week of the month. The thirty-seventh week is the thirty-seventh week of the month. The thirty-eighth week is the thirty-eighth week of the month. The thirty-ninth week is the thirty-ninth week of the month. The fortieth week is the fortieth week of the month. The forty-first week is the forty-first week of the month. The forty-second week is the forty-second week of the month. The forty-third week is the forty-third week of the month. The forty-fourth week is the forty-fourth week of the month. The forty-fifth week is the forty-fifth week of the month. The forty-sixth week is the forty-sixth week of the month. The forty-seventh week is the forty-seventh week of the month. The forty-eighth week is the forty-eighth week of the month. The forty-ninth week is the forty-ninth week of the month. The fiftieth week is the fiftieth week of the month. The fifty-first week is the fifty-first week of the month. The fifty-second week is the fifty-second week of the month. The fifty-third week is the fifty-third week of the month. The fifty-fourth week is the fifty-fourth week of the month. The fifty-fifth week is the fifty-fifth week of the month. The fifty-sixth week is the fifty-sixth week of the month. The fifty-seventh week is the fifty-seventh week of the month. The fifty-eighth week is the fifty-eighth week of the month. The fifty-ninth week is the fifty-ninth week of the month. The sixtieth week is the sixtieth week of the month. The sixty-first week is the sixty-first week of the month. The sixty-second week is the sixty-second week of the month. The sixty-third week is the sixty-third week of the month. The sixty-fourth week is the sixty-fourth week of the month. The sixty-fifth week is the sixty-fifth week of the month. The sixty-sixth week is the sixty-sixth week of the month. The sixty-seventh week is the sixty-seventh week of the month. The sixty-eighth week is the sixty-eighth week of the month. The sixty-ninth week is the sixty-ninth week of the month. The seventieth week is the seventieth week of the month. The seventy-first week is the seventy-first week of the month. The seventy-second week is the seventy-second week of the month. The seventy-third week is the seventy-third week of the month. The seventy-fourth week is the seventy-fourth week of the month. The seventy-fifth week is the seventy-fifth week of the month. The seventy-sixth week is the seventy-sixth week of the month. The seventy-seventh week is the seventy-seventh week of the month. The seventy-eighth week is the seventy-eighth week of the month. The seventy-ninth week is the seventy-ninth week of the month. The eightieth week is the eightieth week of the month. The eighty-first week is the eighty-first week of the month. The eighty-second week is the eighty-second week of the month. The eighty-third week is the eighty-third week of the month. The eighty-fourth week is the eighty-fourth week of the month. The eighty-fifth week is the eighty-fifth week of the month. The eighty-sixth week is the eighty-sixth week of the month. The eighty-seventh week is the eighty-seventh week of the month. The eighty-eighth week is the eighty-eighth week of the month. The eighty-ninth week is the eighty-ninth week of the month. The ninetieth week is the ninetieth week of the month. The ninety-first week is the ninety-first week of the month. The ninety-second week is the ninety-second week of the month. The ninety-third week is the ninety-third week of the month. The ninety-fourth week is the ninety-fourth week of the month. The ninety-fifth week is the ninety-fifth week of the month. The ninety-sixth week is the ninety-sixth week of the month. The ninety-seventh week is the ninety-seventh week of the month. The ninety-eighth week is the ninety-eighth week of the month. The ninety-ninth week is the ninety-ninth week of the month. The hundredth week is the hundredth week of the month.

TABLE 20

THE HMONG TWELVE-DAY WEEK

First week	Second week	Remainder	Animal
Ga-gao-pi	Ga-gao-pi	Ga-hing-gao-pi	Chicken
Gao-gao-pi	Gao-gao-pi	Gao-hing-gao-pi	Pig
Ba-gao-pi	Ba-gao-pi	Ba-hing-gao-pi	Rat
Xa-gao-pi	Xa-gao-pi	Xa-hing-gao-pi	Tiger
Ja-gao-pi	Ja-gao-pi	Ja-hing-gao-pi	Rabbit
La-gao-pi	La-gao-pi	La-hing-gao-pi	Dragon
Ya-gao-pi	Ya-gao-pi	Ya-hing-gao-pi	Snake
Na-gao-pi	Na-gao-pi	Na-hing-gao-pi	Horse
Ha-gao-pi	Ha-gao-pi	Ha-hing-gao-pi	Goat
Ya-gao-pi	Ya-gao-pi	Ya-hing-gao-pi	Monkey

¹⁴ M. Savina, *Histoire des Miao*, p. 230.

¹⁵ Nui Chindarsi, *The Religion of the Hmong Njua*, pp. 58-59.

TABLE 21
THE VIETNAMESE SERIES OF TEN, THE SERIES OF TWELVE AND
THEIR ASSOCIATIONS

Decimal		Duodecimal	
Series	Association	Series	Association
Giáp	Salt water	Ti	Rat
Ái	Water from a well	Suá	Buffalo
Hính	Lightning	Dán	Tiger
Dính	Incense	Mèo	Cat*
Màu	Living tree	Thần	Dragon
K	Timber	Ti	Serpent
Caoth	Mineral	Ngo	Horse
Tan	Metal vase	Mai	Goat
Nham	Virgin lands	Thân	Monkey
Qui	Cultivated land	Dau	Cock
		Tuát	Dog
		Hoi	Pig

*Apparently the word Mèo, association "Hare", of the original system became confused with a local word for "cat".

The Vietnamese system of "five agents"²⁸ differs from that of the Chinese in that the order of agents has not changed. Originally the sequence was Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal and Water, but the Vietnamese take Water, Fire, Wood, Metal and Earth. A comparison of the Chinese and Vietnamese lists reveals that the Vietnamese series are almost identical with those of the Chinese and these associations therefore probably derive from a common Tai origin, and by some means have survived in the Chinese vocabulary even in the changes of Vietnamese words, almost fitting in with the original model. With regard to the duodecimal set of names, the Vietnamese also know this set in a version related to Mongolian, sometimes those which is shared with the Cambodians and Siamese peoples. The Vietnamese version runs exactly like that of the Chinese (and Yunnan and Laotian), 1980 being a *hỏi* (seven)th year.

j) The Khmer cycle

The Cambodian secondary cycle is virtually identical with the one described for Siam and set out in Table 16 above. There can be no doubt that there has been close interaction between Khmer and Siamese in the establishment of that cycle. The twelve-year cycle had been introduced at a very early age via the Cambodians to Siam. Later the Pa=based primary set was added, probably upon Sanskrit initiative in imitation of the ancient sixty-year cycle in operation amongst other Tai peoples. The result was a complex *secondary* *tertiary* *quaternary* set. This cycle is not regulated so as to run in a sequence with that of the Chinese.

²⁸ The list of associations can be found in A. Schneider, *Les institutions annamites en haute-Cochinchine avant la conquête française*, Volume II, Saigon: Claude & Cie, 1901, pp. 256-59. A somewhat garbled version can be read in A. Cadell Crawford, *Customs and Culture of Vietnam*, Rutland: Tuttle, 1966, p. 186.

SECTION 2

The lunar calendar

a) The Indian system

The Indian lunar possesses a combination of the basic lunar cycle movement of the moon. This lunar year begins on the first day of the waxing moon of the first (Chaitra) waxing phase, late March or beginning April, always before New Year Day is celebrated according to the Indian solar year (late May). Indian lunar calendars, if so adjusted with intercalary months after the regular lunar year, are lunar years. Whenever there are two new moons while the sun is in one and the same sign of the zodiac a month is inserted and the year is according to the Indian system. Intercalary months may fall at any time of the year and occasionally a year is even shorter, in order to adjust the lunar to the solar reckoning. With respect to the number of days of the lunar month, the Indian lunar calendar is divided into two classes: the *amanta* system, in which the lunar year and the calendar form a pre-designed system of "long" and "short" months. The duration of each waxing and each waning moon is fixed by astronomical observations and the lunar year is accordingly divided into "long" and "short" months. A waxing or waning moon may be as short as thirteen days or as long as sixteen days.² According to the Indian lunar calendar, even if from the basis of that of the Tai.

b) The Burmese system

The Burmese lunar calendar shows a mixture of Indian influence in the manner of the division of the year with the first waxing day of a new moon. The system is a mixture of the Indian system (Caitra) and the Burmese system (Chaitra) and the Burmese lunar calendar. Thus the Burmese lunar months are divided alternatively to be twenty-nine and thirty. All waxing moons are thirty and waning moons are twenty-nine days and the waxing moons are thirty and waning moons are twenty-nine days. Moreover, the intercalary month is added at a fixed period of the year, namely between the fourth and fifth Burmese month in the year. An intercalary month is added seven times in nineteen years and the system selected is that the month is added in the second, fourth, sixth, eighth, tenth, twelfth and fourteenth year of the nineteen-year cycle. The intercalary month is added at a fixed period of the year, namely between the fourth and fifth Burmese month in the year. An intercalary month is added seven times in nineteen years and the system selected is that the month is added in the second, fourth, sixth, eighth, tenth, twelfth and fourteenth year of the nineteen-year cycle. The intercalary month is added at a fixed period of the year, namely between the fourth and fifth Burmese month in the year. An intercalary month is added seven times in nineteen years and the system selected is that the month is added in the second, fourth, sixth, eighth, tenth, twelfth and fourteenth year of the nineteen-year cycle.

There are some differences between the Burmese lunar calendar and that of the Tai. The Burmese lunar calendar is divided into two classes: the *amanta* system, in which the lunar year and the calendar form a pre-designed system of "long" and "short" months. The duration of each waxing and each waning moon is fixed by astronomical observations and the lunar year is accordingly divided into "long" and "short" months. A waxing or waning moon may be as short as thirteen days or as long as sixteen days.² According to the Indian lunar calendar, even if from the basis of that of the Tai.

²¹ R. Sewel and S. B. D. Kshir, *The Indian Calendar*, pp. 31-32 and J. F. Fleet, in his review of A. M. B. Irwin, *The Burmese and Arakanese Calendars*, in *The Indian Antiquary*, October 1910, pp. 250-56.

²² Cunningham, *Book of Indian Eras*,

p. 71.

²³ Shway Yoe (pseud. J. G. Scott), *The Burman: His Life and Notions* (New York: Norton, 1963), pp. 349-52. See also J. F. Fleet, "Review", p. 252.

ture. The extra day needed to adjust the lunar months is added to a different month in different years and for successive periods of one year for the 12 months in an ascertained probably 60-year cycle. The same time is the Burmese *lundi*. It is said to be said for the secret of insertion of the intercalary month. It is said that at the end of the Burmese four-month period at the end of the year when it provides insert their extra month. In all that respects the Burmese and Chinese lunar reckoning are the same and there can be no doubt that the two have the same systems are related. It may be concluded that the Chinese records of the Indian origin of the Burmese lunar reckoning system are misleading and not based upon a consideration of the full facts.

The records and chart of the Burmese months for the year to be mentioned for the names of the months. These are arranged in Burmese in an alphabetical order have been arranged to trace. As indicated by these names are arranged in alphabetical order in the chart. It is also true that they form a set and any other name is the same. The literature for general interest of the Burmese months is given in the chart. It is also true that any other name will be due to the fact that they are reported in Table 22 to be the old and modern spelling and the year of the year.

TABLE 22
BURMESE MONTHS THEIR NAMES IN OLD AND MODERN SPELLING

Old Burmese	Modern Burmese	Time of the year
Tankho (Tangkha)	Tagu	March-April
Kuchur (Kachun)	Kasong	April-May
Namytin	Nayong	May-June
Mlwita	Waso	June-July
Namka	Wagaung	July-August
Tumvalang (Tawlang)	Tawthalin	August-September
Saru	Thaulingyi	September-October
Tanchongmuri	Tasalingmuri	October-November
Nattaw	Nuraw	November-December
Plasow (Plasuw)	Pyatho	December-January
Tapuiwhway	Tabodwo	January-February
Tapong	Tabaung	February-March

c) Akha and P'u Nal months

To let a people in a village in forty groups of men and Southeast Asia is not very different in the levels of the yearly calendar. It is said that the Akha knew a month of thirty days.¹⁹ It would be necessary to find out whether they are the same months of the year and how they relate to the year and what years to the other people. That information is scarce. Of greater interest is the remark that the Akha New Year is celebrated for four days before dawn in October.²⁰ Many

¹⁹ Cunningham, *Bank of Indian Eras*, 328-29 p. 71.

²⁰ The list of old Burmese names is a summary from a larger list in Luce, *Old Burma—Early Pagan*, Volume II, pp

²¹ Bernatzik, *Akha and Meao*, Volume 2, p. 433.

²² *Idem*

Three distinct pieces of evidence may be put together for the favour of a reconstruction, namely that the Tai of Assam possess a lunar solar calendar, that the Tai of Assam have adopted the solar calendar, and that the first item of the Tai of Assam calendar is the New Year festival. The second item of the Tai of Assam calendar is the distribution of the lunar month into three systems of numbering months. It has been suggested by Dr. M. D. Vaidya that the latter pointing to some aspect of Southeast Asian calendar which may be part of a local system. The third item is the spread of "proto-Muong" names for the Chinese lunar month to the Tai of Assam (and Siamese) calendar indicating that calendar information spread to the Tai of Assam from a north-eastern region. These three items may be taken together with the fact that the north-eastern monsoon dominates the Andaman and Irianese coast and that this is the only region in mainland Southeast Asia where the monsoon is important. This may well be the area of the Southeast Asian calendar system may have evolved from a few areas in the region and may be a traditional motif of the region. Whether or not the calendar can be accepted as more than a reconstruction depends upon later research.

SECTION 3

Weeks, days and subdivisions of days

a) The Indian system

Thus far no sign of a ten day or a seven day week has been found in the literature on Indian mathematics. The typical Indian week is the division of the Indian lunar month into four parts. These are from the day of the new moon to the eighth day of waxing moon, from the eighth day of waxing moon to the eighth day of waning moon, from the eighth day of waning moon to the eighth day of waxing moon, and from the eighth day of waxing moon to the eighth day of waning moon. These days were reckoned very early in the history of the beginning of the era, the traditional, sacred days of the Indian calendar reckoning, and the intervals varied slightly as the calendar evolved. These were reckoned long or short. The Southeast Asian countries which adopted Buddhism have adopted a similar division of the lunar month into four periods because even in the earliest days of Buddhism these sacred days were reckoned as days of waxing moon. However, since the lunar month in Southeast Asia is calculated upon solar cycles of months from the ones which are based on the Indian lunar month, the Buddhist holy days of Southeast Asia are also reckoned according to the Indian lunar calendar.

Although the interval between the Hindu or Buddhist sacred days may often coincide with a week of seven days, the seven day week is completely distinct from the Indian division of the lunar month. The seven day week probably originates from Babylonia. It was used in India in the 1st century A.D. and probably earlier.¹⁰ Under Indian influence this week was intro-

¹⁰ P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmashāstra*, Dharmashāstra, Part I, Vol. I, Part I, Poona: Bhandarkar, 1879-85. Oriental Research Institute, Government

of dividing the day it is one and the same list which underlies the one used by Burmese, Siamese and Laotian astronomers and astrologers. A specialist on Indian systems of computation of time might be able to identify the exact text which must have formed the basis of this particular development.

Apart from the divisions of the day which are suitable to the ritual specialist in his calculation of exact auspicious moments, there is also a traditional village daily subdivision based upon factors such as general positions of sun and moon and regularly recurring daily activities of farmers and their domestic animals.⁴² Some of these moments of time are enumerated in Table 24. Unfortunately Soday Yoc provides only a segment of the complete list, halting some time in the morning with the frustrating word "etcetera". Moreover, amongst the few expressions listed, several of the time-markers, in particular those relating to Buddhist monks, represent aspects of time-computation which came with the advent of Buddhism and which can therefore have no bearing on questions relating to the Ancient Tai culture. The remaining few entries show more attention paid to the height of the sun above the horizon than was encountered in any of the lists of Tai divisions of the day. The Tai occasionally refer to the shadow's length in diurnal time-reckoning.

TABLE 24
BURMESE TRADITIONAL DIVISIONS OF THE DAY: SOME EXAMPLES

Description	Approximate time
The earliest cock-crowing time	
Before the sky is light-time	
When the light gets strength	5.30 a.m.
When monks go on alms-round	6 a.m. - 7 a.m.
When monks return from alms	8 a.m.
Breakfast time	8 a.m.
When sun is a span over horizon	
When sun is high as a toddypalm	
Etc.	

c) The Akha, Khmu, P'u Noi, Hmong and Lamet weeks

In the ethnographic literature on Southeast Asian minority groups there is an occasional reference to a week. The Akha are reported to use a twelve-day week⁴³ and since they designate each day with an animal from the Chinese zodiacal series, there can be little doubt that this week is formed directly or indirectly as a result of the Chinese calendrical system. The same twelve-day week has been encountered amongst the Tai Drai and also amongst the Hmong and the P'u Noi. The latter call their twelve-day cycle a *hri*.⁴⁴ The account for the Khmu, in which it was reported that they possess a sixteen-day week, has been dealt with in some detail in the first section of this chapter. It has been shown that the account is not wholly reliable and that the Khmu probably use the full sexagesimal day cycle.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 553-54.

⁴³ Roux, "Deux tribus de la région de"

⁴⁴ Bernatzik, *Akha and Miao*, Volume 2, Pongsaly, p. 431.

It thus seems that the *Chironomus tentaculatus* can be said to possess a ten-day cycle.

In a similar manner, the festival days of the Lamel may be read as follows: the festival days are the 1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th, 9th, 11th, 13th, 15th, 17th, 19th, 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th, 29th, 31st, 33rd, 35th, 37th, 39th, 41st, 43rd, 45th, 47th, 49th, 51st, 53rd, 55th, 57th, 59th, 61st, 63rd, 65th, 67th, 69th, 71st, 73rd, 75th, 77th, 79th, 81st, 83rd, 85th, 87th, 89th, 91st, 93rd, 95th, 97th, 99th, 101st, 103rd, 105th, 107th, 109th, 111th, 113th, 115th, 117th, 119th, 121st, 123rd, 125th, 127th, 129th, 131st, 133rd, 135th, 137th, 139th, 141st, 143rd, 145th, 147th, 149th, 151st, 153rd, 155th, 157th, 159th, 161st, 163rd, 165th, 167th, 169th, 171st, 173rd, 175th, 177th, 179th, 181st, 183rd, 185th, 187th, 189th, 191st, 193rd, 195th, 197th, 199th, 201st, 203rd, 205th, 207th, 209th, 211th, 213th, 215th, 217th, 219th, 221st, 223rd, 225th, 227th, 229th, 231st, 233rd, 235th, 237th, 239th, 241st, 243rd, 245th, 247th, 249th, 251st, 253rd, 255th, 257th, 259th, 261st, 263rd, 265th, 267th, 269th, 271st, 273rd, 275th, 277th, 279th, 281st, 283rd, 285th, 287th, 289th, 291st, 293rd, 295th, 297th, 299th, 301st, 303rd, 305th, 307th, 309th, 311th, 313th, 315th, 317th, 319th, 321st, 323rd, 325th, 327th, 329th, 331st, 333rd, 335th, 337th, 339th, 341st, 343rd, 345th, 347th, 349th, 351st, 353rd, 355th, 357th, 359th, 361st, 363rd, 365th, 367th, 369th, 371st, 373rd, 375th, 377th, 379th, 381st, 383rd, 385th, 387th, 389th, 391st, 393rd, 395th, 397th, 399th, 401st, 403rd, 405th, 407th, 409th, 411th, 413th, 415th, 417th, 419th, 421st, 423rd, 425th, 427th, 429th, 431st, 433rd, 435th, 437th, 439th, 441st, 443rd, 445th, 447th, 449th, 451st, 453rd, 455th, 457th, 459th, 461st, 463rd, 465th, 467th, 469th, 471st, 473rd, 475th, 477th, 479th, 481st, 483rd, 485th, 487th, 489th, 491st, 493rd, 495th, 497th, 499th, 501st, 503rd, 505th, 507th, 509th, 511th, 513th, 515th, 517th, 519th, 521st, 523rd, 525th, 527th, 529th, 531st, 533rd, 535th, 537th, 539th, 541st, 543rd, 545th, 547th, 549th, 551st, 553rd, 555th, 557th, 559th, 561st, 563rd, 565th, 567th, 569th, 571st, 573rd, 575th, 577th, 579th, 581st, 583rd, 585th, 587th, 589th, 591st, 593rd, 595th, 597th, 599th, 601st, 603rd, 605th, 607th, 609th, 611th, 613th, 615th, 617th, 619th, 621st, 623rd, 625th, 627th, 629th, 631st, 633rd, 635th, 637th, 639th, 641st, 643rd, 645th, 647th, 649th, 651st, 653rd, 655th, 657th, 659th, 661st, 663rd, 665th, 667th, 669th, 671st, 673rd, 675th, 677th, 679th, 681st, 683rd, 685th, 687th, 689th, 691st, 693rd, 695th, 697th, 699th, 701st, 703rd, 705th, 707th, 709th, 711th, 713th, 715th, 717th, 719th, 721st, 723rd, 725th, 727th, 729th, 731st, 733rd, 735th, 737th, 739th, 741st, 743rd, 745th, 747th, 749th, 751st, 753rd, 755th, 757th, 759th, 761st, 763rd, 765th, 767th, 769th, 771st, 773rd, 775th, 777th, 779th, 781st, 783rd, 785th, 787th, 789th, 791st, 793rd, 795th, 797th, 799th, 801st, 803rd, 805th, 807th, 809th, 811th, 813th, 815th, 817th, 819th, 821st, 823rd, 825th, 827th, 829th, 831st, 833rd, 835th, 837th, 839th, 841st, 843rd, 845th, 847th, 849th, 851st, 853rd, 855th, 857th, 859th, 861st, 863rd, 865th, 867th, 869th, 871st, 873rd, 875th, 877th, 879th, 881st, 883rd, 885th, 887th, 889th, 891st, 893rd, 895th, 897th, 899th, 901st, 903rd, 905th, 907th, 909th, 911th, 913th, 915th, 917th, 919th, 921st, 923rd, 925th, 927th, 929th, 931st, 933rd, 935th, 937th, 939th, 941st, 943rd, 945th, 947th, 949th, 951st, 953rd, 955th, 957th, 959th, 961st, 963rd, 965th, 967th, 969th, 971st, 973rd, 975th, 977th, 979th, 981st, 983rd, 985th, 987th, 989th, 991st, 993rd, 995th, 997th, 999th, 1001st, 1003rd, 1005th, 1007th, 1009th, 1011th, 1013th, 1015th, 1017th, 1019th, 1021st, 1023rd, 1025th, 1027th, 1029th, 1031st, 1033rd, 1035th, 1037th, 1039th, 1041st, 1043rd, 1045th, 1047th, 1049th, 1051st, 1053rd, 1055th, 1057th, 1059th, 1061st, 1063rd, 1065th, 1067th, 1069th, 1071st, 1073rd, 1075th, 1077th, 1079th, 1081st, 1083rd, 1085th, 1087th, 1089th, 1091st, 1093rd, 1095th, 1097th, 1099th, 1101st, 1103rd, 1105th, 1107th, 1109th, 1111th, 1113th, 1115th, 1117th, 1119th, 1121st, 1123rd, 1125th, 1127th, 1129th, 1131st, 1133rd, 1135th, 1137th, 1139th, 1141st, 1143rd, 1145th, 1147th, 1149th, 1151st, 1153rd, 1155th, 1157th, 1159th, 1161st, 1163rd, 1165th, 1167th, 1169th, 1171st, 1173rd, 1175th, 1177th, 1179th, 1181st, 1183rd, 1185th, 1187th, 1189th, 1191st, 1193rd, 1195th, 1197th, 1199th, 1201st, 1203rd, 1205th, 1207th, 1209th, 1211th, 1213th, 1215th, 1217th, 1219th, 1221st, 1223rd, 1225th, 1227th, 1229th, 1231st, 1233rd, 1235th, 1237th, 1239th, 1241st, 1243rd, 1245th, 1247th, 1249th, 1251st, 1253rd, 1255th, 1257th, 1259th, 1261st, 1263rd, 1265th, 1267th, 1269th, 1271st, 1273rd, 1275th, 1277th, 1279th, 1281st, 1283rd, 1285th, 1287th, 1289th, 1291st, 1293rd, 1295th, 1297th, 1299th, 1301st, 1303rd, 1305th, 1307th, 1309th, 1311th, 1313th, 1315th, 1317th, 1319th, 1321st,

d) *The Chinese week and subdivisions of the day*

There is still a caution suggesting that from very early times, long before the Han period, during which the main features of the sixty-day and sixty-year cycles were adopted, there was an early week. This week was called *hsun* and lasted ten days. It seems that this ten-day cycle served as a subdivision of the lunar month. This feature has been encountered also amongst present-day Hmong and Jwengs of the twenty-six Table 301 and in the descriptions of Mong and Vietnamese months. It appears quite possible that the Mong, Miao and Vietnamese derive this feature from ancient China. In the early Chinese system of time-reckoning the *hsun* cycle had an important religious significance. Specific days of the *hsun* week were reserved by the ruler for worship of particular ancestors.⁴⁰ This *hsun* week gradually lost its importance. There is no evidence which would warrant the suggestion that the *hsun* week was ever subdivided into two equal parts. It may therefore be assumed that the reconstructed Tai five-day week, like the November-December New Year, and the method of counting months, represents a feature of Ancient Tai culture which is not derived from Chinese methods of computation of time.

From very early times the Chinese have been dividing a new day at the moment of an intercalary counting twelve periods until reaching a new day the following morning, so that each period is equal to two international hours. As can be expected, the twelve periods were given the names of the twelve earthly branches.¹⁰ There were also smaller divisions of the day. In the early Han period, in the first or second century B.C., a method was already in use which consisted upon sundials and whereby the day and night was split up into one hundred segments, each one equivalent to just over fifteen minutes of modern time. In addition to these accurate ways of time reckoning, which probably were mostly used by astronomers,

[illegible]

Cradle of the East, pp. 336-44.

people used a series of descriptive terms, such as "cock-crow", "noon", "lunch-hour" and "sunset". The sundial system and popular expressions were combined and moments of the day could be described by expressions such as "lunch-hour and three sections" (lit. "lunch-hour plus three") or "sunset and four sections". The latter in our terms would be "one hour after sunset".⁴⁰

Apart from a few superficial similarities which probably go back to virtually ubiquitous features of the civilisation, the evidence from early China shows that there are no discernible similarities between what could be established as Ancient Tai features and early Chinese, at least with regard to the diurnal divisions. There is no sign that the Tai have ever used the Chinese unit of a hundredth of a day. The only correspondence in the literature are the fact that the Dui and the Black Tai may divide their day into twelve parts. In the case of the Dui this may be ascribed to a general Sinitisation, and the list of the Black Tai divisions shows that the Black Tai system does not closely correspond with that of the Chinese.

e) *The Muong and Vietnamese diurnal divisions and weeks*

The case, described for the division into twelve parts of the Black Tai, may have also been made for the Muong.⁴¹

The days themselves are divided into twelve, and each of these divisions which is sequenced as follows: dawn, hours, is placed under the one of the normal twelve tropical seasons. The divisions are further given in relation to dawn, at noon, sunset, cock-crow, with the first morning, with the greatest heat, with the greatest cold, with the beginning of the afternoon, with the middle of the afternoon, with the hour for preparing for bed, with the hour for sleeping etc. Although several of these applications can be found in other Tai languages, no real link linking them with the twelve divisions can be found.

As described in the previous section, such a system for the Muong and the Vietnamese divide a month up into three sets, also called "complete months", and into two diurnal sets and one period of three days, the complete and "incomplete one". Each set of ten or nine days is indicated by a generic term, and the position of a day in the series is indicated simply by a numeral.

f) *The Khmer week*

In the literature on Cambodia the seven-day week is dominant. It was already firmly established in the thirteenth century.⁴² There has been no trace thus far of a ten-day week. However, there is ample evidence that the twenty-five square diagram has only been used in Cambodia. This diagram, described in Chapter 6 for the Black Tai and the Tai Lams, and in a variant form for the Siamese, has been used as corroborating evidence for the existence of an Ancient Tai ten-day week. If that reconstruction of the five-day week and the link with the diagram was correct, it is suggested that this type of horoscope spread from the Tai peoples to the Cambodians.

⁴⁰ Loewe, *Everyday Life in Early Imperial China*, p. 103.

⁴¹ Cassiniet, *Les Mu'ong*, p. 305.

⁴² P. Pelliot (translator and editor), *Mémoires sur les coutumes du Cambodge par Tchou Ta-Kouan*, Extrait du Bulletin de

l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, Hanoi, F. H. Schneider, 1902.

⁴³ P. Biard, "A propos d'une carte horoscopique laotienne", p. 381, He mentions various Khmer manuscripts.

CONCLUSIONS

In this book the technique developed to study aspects of Ancient Tai culture has been applied in two distinct fields of enquiry: blood sacrifices and the computation of time. In each case first the evidence collected personally from the Khamvang, the Phakey, the Khamu and the Ahom peoples has been presented in some detail, thus filling a considerable gap in the ethnographic literature on Tai peoples. In each case this was followed by the results of a search through the literature in the whole range of Tai peoples for information in the same aspect of culture. This material then was summarised and an assessment was made as to which aspects qualified for inclusion in the Ancient Tai culture. Guided by these findings, literature on peoples surrounding the Tai was scanned for signs of whether or not patterns similar to those ascribed the Ancient Tai label could be

This latter search often proved helpful in uncovering a variety of phenomena, some of which apparently indicated borrowing in one direction or another, at a fairly early stage of the development of Tai peoples, and others of a recent origin of cultural contact.

It is hoped that this book has been shown to be a fruitful research tool. The two chapters on ritual clearly that both topics have been treated in a way that would be valuable in sufficient detail as to make it possible to suggest that the most traditional aspects which different Tai groups have in common. Even more important is the observation that in both the data on sacrifices and on time and the computation the Tai data, taken as a whole, are markedly different from those of surrounding peoples. The Tai set of data are easily compared; they are similar, compatible and apparently related. The surrounding peoples are heterogeneous and their data have served mainly to illustrate a wide variety there exists in the cultural traditions of the region. This observation is particularly valid for the study of sacrificial traditions.

The emergence of a distinctive manner of conducting a Tai communal sacrifice may be seen as a contradiction to one of the basic assumptions underlying this whole exercise, namely that of the existence of a phenomenon as an Ancient Tai culture. In the foregoing I have relatively homogenised a tradition which existed at the end of the first millennium A.D. and which rapidly dispersed over mainland South-east Asia into a diverse range of separate cultures.

It may be pointed out here that the Ancient Tai pattern is not the result of careful editing and selecting only those cultural and ethnographic reports which fit in with a preconceived idea of Tai culture. Great care has been taken to present both ideas and not to force the separate groups that many Tai groups have forgotten since their emergence. In this respect this study differs from many other comparative ethnological works where researchers in their enthusiasm present only the details which support their theory.

An effort has been made to avoid some of the other pitfalls in comparing cultural traditions. Thus the scope is limited to a specific region. The presentation of a fairly full Tai culture has deliberately been limited to the Tai and their immediate neighbours. It must be admitted that such a limitation has unavoidably widened the scope and would be needed further perspectives. At the same time, the material available for various studies in the comparison of the major Tai groups, mainly with ethnographic data from the Burmese and Indo-Chinese, is so large that it is likely to produce many new studies. Until now, I have been able to establish a few links between ritual aspects of the religions. For example, the Chinese snake cult appears to occur in Southeast Asia. With respect to the material presented in this book, only a single instance of striking and detailed similarity between material in Southeast Asia and Indo-China has been encountered. This concerns a legend regarding a snake which is recorded for the first time which shows a number of features in common with the traditions discussed above in Chapter 6. This is, of course, an intriguing piece of information but not necessarily one upon which the conclusions can be based. In the meantime, the Burmese situation is not completely clear. Second, and now, a number of other signs of contact between peoples of Burma and Indo-Chinese in Southeast Asia have been observed and I assume that a further and more common need that suggests a relationship may be traced to a common source of the direct contact. Third, and now, a historical approach to such early contacts between Burmese people and Indo-Chinese in Southeast Asia and I have taken place has not been satisfactorily explored.

It is in the latter section that the present study is based on many other works, and on the fact that the study is based on a study of the historical background. The study of the historical background and the study has been taken into account all the way through the study and these pieces of evidence with a view to a better understanding of the subject. The outline of the earliest Tai culture is very difficult to trace, but the picture is rather suggestive of the late Pre-Tai culture, which was the Har dynasty of China. It is, of course, it has been found that the Tai people got into the area only in the early centuries of the present era. However, the first evidence of the Tai people in the early centuries of the present era. A number of the investigation in the early centuries of the present era of Tai culture as to a comparison of what is known about Tai culture with that of the D'ng-Son culture. Some speculations about this are were published elsewhere.*

In the last part of the book, it has already been noted that the four Tai groups, representatives of which live in Assam, are part of a more general Tai pattern and that with regard to the Tai culture. The same observation may be made of the Tai people of Khamvay, Phakey, Khamvay, and Ayeyarwady, and it is not surprising that in time they will be found to be part of the Tai group. Moreover, these Tai have given proof of their relationship with the Tai people of the Tai people. The cause may be as a result of the Tai people of the Tai people.

* M. Cowan, "Essay d'ethnologie comparée", *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-orient*, Volume XXXVI, 1936, Plate XXXVIII, opposite p. 268.
* Terwiel, "The Origin of the Tai Peoples Reconsidered", pp. 252-54.

argued that this may well have been related to a northern monsoon-dominated agricultural cycle. In the rest of this evidence it seems that the community sacrifice might originally have taken place some time between September and November in order to celebrate the imminent growing season. The few places where Tai people live a second sacrifice ritual thus become a remnant of past practices which has been abandoned by many Tai groups in order to adjust to a different agricultural calendar when they spread over mainland Southeast Asia.

There can be no doubt as to the fact that the Ancient Tai possessed a general rest during the days upon which the communal sacrifice took place. The community thus rarely separated itself from the rest of the world. Nobles could have no other visitors and even non-visitants were allowed to enter whilst the festival was being held. No work in the fields was permitted. Roads leading to the community were blocked to ensure that nobody would intrude.

The Ancient Tai communal sacrifice was carried out at a shrine outside the village with a village. There is a strong possibility that as a rule such a shrine was built in the vicinity of a large tree, the tree connected with the guardian deity of the community. The shrine itself was a construction of wood which was constructed of tall poles and reeds up at some distance from the ground by a set of ladders. The space within was a thatched roof. It was a perfect construction but if each year a new one was built a roof might be omitted.

The sacrifice centered around the ritual slaughter of at least one large domestic animal, usually a buffalo. Such an offering should be a healthy strong and a fat animal of the male gender. Apart from the buffalo, other gifts to the spirits must also have been presented and in the case of a rather large-scale offering sacrifice it is worth imagining a selection of other domestic animals such as ducks and geese as presents to other powers which were invited together with the guardian spirits. At all sacrifices, big or small, rice, sweets and alcohol beverages must have been included.

It has not been possible to reconstruct the ritual which was used to kill the animal, a considerable variety of weapons may have been utilized. The general practice seems to be that the buffalo had a blow vessel cut in its neck. It was important that the victim was accompanied by a show of blood. This substance was collected and separately presented to the gods. The animal's skin was always taken made in the vicinity of the altar.

In the large *muang* where the ritual can be expected to have taken an elaborate form all members of the Tai pantheon were worshipped but in the smaller *muang* they were only the more important of the ritual were carried out. The *Phu Mueang* or guardian spirit of the *muang* alone may have been honored. It has not been possible to identify with certainty any power in the Ancient Tai world of gods other than the *Phu Mueang*. The material brought forward suggests however that the general classes of unseen powers which act as intermediaries between a deity and man may go back to a shared culture. Thus there were a set of great celestial gods, possibly known by the general term *phra* or a line of precursors of this term, there were gods of natural forces, gods that are safeguarding the family laws, especially those pertaining to marriage, and a connection with the earth and powers inhabiting the surrounding mountains. It would be fascinating

to the
the fact that
vet may not
One factor
tence of
therefore
may have
probable
tion capabilities
able

On the other hand, the Taoist Taoists on Account of their work derives from this book is the central role of spirit possession. In Ancient Taoist religion, spirits can be summoned. It was believed that the unseen powers, attracted by incense and the supplications by the smell of the flowers, candles, incense by food and drink, beverages and the reck of animal blood and aided by certain ritual paraphernalia can be persuaded to be present at the ceremonies or sometimes even to preside over the most important stages of the ritual. From the days of the Ancient Taoist religion there have been ritual specialists, called *shen* who have shown themselves as able and their bodies fit for its purpose. At the appropriate moment, after just ritual incantations take place, after all the preparations have been made, the purification has been a good omenate. With power descending to attend the ceremony never comes as a surprise. On sessions where many spirits come down they follow a prepared order and the spirit mediums' helpers have sets of costume appropriate for the various gods at hand and dress up the medium accordingly.

The record that the descent of Jesus was an event had in the Ancient and Primitive Man, that as a result of the extent of these collateral sacrifices were made, and that the sufficient area at the same time of the great world, he could be seen there than in the present, but also, as the descent of Jesus was an appropriate place for this formal contact between humanity and the godly powers. The physical appearance of Jesus, as he chose to be, was such that the common people could see him, and that the gods are backed off, such measures may have existed for the gods, with a view to circumstances which could hinder the god's coming.

The importance of the above power aspect is further underlined by the fact that there are some ritual paraphernalia which appear to be there solely for the purpose of facilitating this aspect. The most important of these is a tall pole to which a ladder and some other sacrificial items are attached. This pole is not so much a bridge between heaven and earth; it may be seen as a tool to help the priest from the particular section on earth. The cult objects and rituals themselves are not where the medium awakens his spirit. A number of rituals look outward toward this feature of the sacrifice as the ritual proceeds, while others are for the sole reason to better the gods' position relative to the suffering human province. This ritual pole of which the ceremony against Anans and the strange suggests an Ancient Tower in its basic presence, the distance with which I stand near the sacred place at night. The ritual is different Vedic and modern versions of what are found in every ritual Sanskrit meaning.

to indicate the series of twelve animals others have half-absorbed the sixty day cycle into their lunar calendar. When a little evidence regarding the sixty year and sixty day cycle is looked at it is striking how all the Tai versions, apart from the Samese, the *wa*, was introduced at a later date than is that of the *tray* or *one*. There is no doubt whatsoever that they all derive from a common Tai source which has been preserved in Ancient Tai *wa* *sa*. This evidence further corroborates the validity of the assumption that as, before the dispersion there was such a thing as a quite homogeneous Ancient Tai culture.

It has been established that many aspects of the Ancient Tai lunar calendar also derive from China. The Chinese developed the system of combining lunar months alternately of long and short ones, they added a day to adjust to the phases of the moon, they discovered the nineteen year lunar cycle and developed the system of intercalary months. All these features the Tai adopted, but it has been shown that not other peoples of mainland Southeast Asia share this aspect with the Tai. From Burma to Vietnam the early calendar system with lunar months is primarily derived from China. Distinctions are not to be made between the Tai, it is usually assumed that the non-Tai and Southeast Asian peoples with a civilization which has solved the major mathematical problems related to the accurate computation of time was with China at the very beginning of our era. Whilst this may be true for the Chinese and for some of the peoples living in the Southeast Asian archipelago, it is not the case for the mainland in general. From the survey of Tai aspects of calendars of mainland Southeast Asian peoples it is clear that the borrowings from Chinese astrology in astronomical observations had spread widely before there was a sign of "Indianization".

The Ancient Tai lunar calendar deviates in some respects from that of the Chinese, namely in that the months are given names in the local vernacular instead of using the names of the twelve earthly branches, and in the fact that the first Tai month must have commenced in November or beginning December. It has been pointed out that there is a possibility that this feature derives from a predominant trait in the Chinese calendar, but this idea has been discarded in favour of one in which the new year was derived from a Southeast Asian calendar.

The wider overview of calendar systems indicates several traces of such a calendar. The names of the first months, the Ancient Tai *wa* *mu* *ni* and the Vietnamese appear closely related. Ancient Tai, Vietnamese and Khmer share the non-Chinese custom of numbering the months from the Ancient Tai and Khmer seem to have known a New Year near end November and beginning December. The Khmer derive their names from the Chinese twelve animals from a pre-Muong source. These individual items of information have been taken as evidence for a calendar system which once was shared by several peoples in mainland Southeast Asia and which originally evolved probably at the coastal areas of Annam and Tonkin, areas where the practice of a common distribution of the agricultural cycle and where a November-December New Year would suit the agricultural cycle.

The wider overview did not provide any clues regarding the possible origin of the Ancient Tai series of ten names, nor of the Ancient Tai five day

work. It is true that this is yet an incomplete picture of the Tai of Southeast Asia.

Enteric, however, has pointed out that the Tai of Siam proper, the Tai of the central and southern parts of the Indochinese peninsula, and the Tai of the Malay Peninsula, all have a different history from the Tai of the Indochinese peninsula and that of the Tai of the Malay Peninsula.

Although it is true that the examination of the Tai of the Indochinese peninsula is not only an academic exercise but also for a number of practical reasons, the Tai of the Malay Peninsula in Volume II underline this remark. The material which has been developed here may be applied without much modification to the study of the Tai of the Malay Peninsula and the Tai of the Indochinese peninsula. The Tai of the Indochinese peninsula have been studied very recently, though I do not expect that there will be many instances which are so clear-cut as the one of the Tai of the Indochinese peninsula. Until the present, the detailed reconstruction of Ancient Tai culture has largely escaped the notice of researchers and the results for a considerable gap in the history of the region. Polynesianists and archaeologists may find this exercise of some help in that it isolates certain aspects of Tai culture which may have left important traces. Upon reading these studies, linguists may decide to further investigate the puzzles unearthed, such as the origin of the names of the languages of the word *talao*. These who, however, ought to be most interested in these volumes are the anthropologists and ethnographers. Hopefully they will be stimulated to produce accurate and detailed reports. Often in the apparently meaningless details the most important historical clues can be found. It is intended to continue the research regarding the reconstruction of Ancient Tai ritual and to start with amongst other things, some of the agricultural rituals and add in the near future yet a third volume to *The Tai of Assam*.

¹Terwiel, "The Origin of the Tai Peoples Reconsidered."

REFERENCES CITED

- 154

- Tribes of China*, Vol. 1, Part 1, pp. 1-10. (London: Council Service, 1975).
- Becker, C. "Das Leben der Kham". *Asiatische Studien* XII XIII, 1917-1918, pp. 494-96.
- Benedict, P. K. *Native Thai Language and Culture*. New Haven: Human Relations Area Files Press, 1975.
- Bernitz, H. A. *Asien und Afrika: Probleme der Anthropologie in Asien und Afrika*. Wiesbaden: L. V. Brockhaus, 1947.
- Bhuyan, S. K. *The People of Assam: A Study of the Tribes and Castes*. Gauhati: Gauhati University Press, 1963.
- Billard, R. "Les inscriptions chinoises dans les inscriptions thaïes". *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient*, Volume LI, 1963, pp. 403-34.
- Blard, P. "A propos d'une canne horoscopique laotienne". *Bulletin de la Société des Études Indochinoises* NS, Volume XXXII, 1957, No. 4, pp. 377-83.
- Blaney, A. L. M. "The Saka Tribes of the Tropic of Cancer". *Journal of the Asiatic Society of India*, Volume VIII, 1907, pp. 77-98.
- Boon Chaey Srisavadi, See Srisavadi, Boon Chaey.
- Boulhet, J. P. *Les Mœurs et Coutumes des Peuples de l'Asie du Sud-Est*. Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1967.
- Bour, S. K. *The People of Assam*. *Bulletin des Annales du R. A. S. S.* Volume 6, 1971, pp. 132-51.
- Bourke, A. *The Tribes of Assam*. Volume 2, 1917, pp. 355-3, 611-32, and 921-32.
- Breiden, J. *Notes sur les populations de la région de l'Assam*. *Journal de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient*, Volume II, 1906, pp. 19-48.
- Brown, B. M. *The People of Assam*. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of India*, Volume VIII, 1907, pp. 77-98.
- Burke, J. *The People of Assam: A Study of the Tribes and Castes of Fourteen Years*. Delhi: Virek Publishing Company, 1978.
- Cadell, Crawford, A. *China and the East*. London: Routledge, 1966.
- Chandler, D. P. *The People of Assam*. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of India*, Volume VIII, 1907, pp. 77-98.
- Chaudhury, P. C. (editor), *Hastividyarnava*. Gauhati: Publication Board, Assam, 1976.
- Chavannes, E. *Les Peuples de l'Asie du Sud-Est*. *Journal de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient*, Volume VII, 1906, pp. 51-122.
- Chodas, N. *The Religion of the Hmong*. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of India*, Volume VIII, 1907, pp. 77-98.
- Coele, G. *The People of Assam*. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of India*, Volume VIII, 1907, pp. 77-98.
- Cole, J. *The People of Assam*. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of India*, Volume VIII, 1907, pp. 77-98.
- Colani, M. "Essai d'ethnologie comparée". *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient*, Volume XXXVI, 1936, pp. 197-280.
- Coghlan, A. R. *Asiatic Studies*. New York: Paragon Book Reprint, 1970.
- Coleman, G. *The People of Assam*. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of India*, Volume VIII, 1907, pp. 77-98.
- Crawford, A. *The People of Assam*. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of India*, Volume VIII, 1907, pp. 77-98.

- Creek, W. T. P. R. Westminster: Constable, 1896.
- Croiset, J. J. M. Paris, Travaux et mémoires de l'Institut d'Ethnologie, Volume XLV, Paris: Institut d'Ethnologie, 1946.
- Croiset, A. H. Varanasi: Indological Book House, 1970.
- Dal, R. 71, 1976, pp. 3-32.
- Dal, H. Berlin: Nauck, 1954.
- Dal, Magazine, Volume CVII, No. 2, pp. 265-88.
- Diguet, E., *Etude de la langue Tha*, Paris: A. Challamel, 1910.
- Dixon, W. C. (compiled and edited by his wife), Cedar Rapids: The Torch Press, 1923.
- Dixon, A. H. (edited by H. K. Beauchamp), 3rd edition, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1968.
- Dixon, W. C. Volume I, Part II, Rangoon: Government Printing, 1960.
- Dixon, S. T. *Ortens*, Volume 10, No. 2, 1957, pp. 296-99.
- Endle, S., *The Kacharis*, Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1975.
- Erasmus, J. Paris: Maisonneuve Frères, 1908.
- Fletcher, R. S. & A. M. B. In *The Indian Antiquary*, October 1910, pp. 250-56.
- Fletcher, O. Leipzig: Hirschmann, 1911.
- Fletcher, H. St. Petersburg: R. Laverentz, 1886.
- Fletcher, H. *Journal of the Burma Research Society*, Volume XII, Pt. 2, 1922, pp. 80-95.
- Gibson, J. *Revue d'Extrême-Orient*, 1979.
- Gibson, J. *Journal of the Siam Society*, Volume XX, Pt. 3, 1927, pp. 187-240.
- Gibson, J. *Journal of the Siam Society*, Volume XXV, Pt. 1, 1933, pp. 39-59.
- Gibson, J. *Journal of the Siam Society*, Volume XXVIII, Pt. 2, 1935, pp. 91-111.
- Gibson, J. *Journal of the Siam Society*, Volume XLII, Pt. 1, August 1955, pp. 49-52.
- Gibson, R. *Buddhist Countries*, 1178 von Göttin Volume 08.

- Young, G., *The Hill Tribes of Northern Thailand*, Bangkok: The Siam Society, 1962.
- Zago, M., *Rites et ceremonies en milieu bouddhiste lao*, Documenta Missionalia No. 6, Roma: Universita Gregoriana, 1972.
- Zühlsdorff, V., "The Witch Doctors of Chiangmai", *Nachrichten der Gesellschaft für Natur-und Völkerkunde Ostasiens*, Hamburg, No. 112, 1972, pp. 79-85.

INDEX

- Aoi Mao Nang, 50, 56
 Agni, 53
 Ahom, coins, 41
 divination, 52-4, 117-9
 incursions, 6-7
 sacrifice, 39-64, 83-8, 111, 176
 temple, 46
 time-reckoning, 123-6, 138-46
 transcription, 14-5
 Akhn, divination, 101, 118
 sacrifice, 101, 113, 175
 talaen, 116
 time-reckoning, 149, 156-7, 162-3
 aliar, 29, 32-3, 38, 49-52, 60, 66, 99, 101, 102, 107-8, 175
 ancestors, 34, 60-2, 81, 103, 107, 171, 173
 Ancient Tai, definition, 3, 167
 Archaic Tai, definition, 3
 areca nut, 30, 37, 51-2, 54, 56, 60, 74, 101
 armband, 86
 Baitung clan, 44
 bamboo, pole, 33, 49, 81, 173
 ring, 49, 63, 86
 banana, fruit, 52, 62, 76
 tree, 49, 50, 61, 64, 116
 banyan, 25, 28
 betel leaf, 30, 37, 51-2, 56, 60, 74
 bird, 41, 81
 black colour, 29, 44, 51, 56, 62, 68, 69, 76, 83, 90, 107, 116, 124
 Black Tai, divination, 119
 sacrifice, 80, 83, 112
 time-reckoning, 136-7, 138-46
 blok sing phra, 51, 58
 blood, collecting, 38-7, 51, 66, 78, 85, 104, 110, 170, 175
 drinking, 40, 70, 82, 91, 110, 174
 sprinkling, 34, 106
 wiping, 37, 109
 boar sacrifice, 29, 31, 41, 44
 Borneo, 168
 brown colour, 44, 89
 Buddha image, 32
 Buddhism, 19-20, 24, 27, 37, 45-6, 66, 73, 74
 buffalo sacrifice, 29, 35, 36, 37, 39, 41, 50-1, 56, 60, 66-8, 69-70, 71, 73, 74-8, 79, 80, 89, 98, 100, 101, 102, 104, 107-11, 112-3, 170, 174, 175
 bull sacrifice, 97, 114
 Burmese, sacrifice, 111-2
 time-reckoning, 148-9, 155-6, 161-2
 cak-jang ritual, 45
 Cambodian, divination, 110, 119
 sacrifice, 109-10, 111-2, 114
 time-reckoning, 154, 159-60, 164
 candle, 35, 72, 76, 77, 81, 86, 102, 171-2
 cat, 35, 115
 cave, 95
 ceti kong nu, 31
 chains, ritual, 49, 85
 Chang Sai Hung, 50
 Chiang, 106-7, 112, 114-5
 chicken, divination, see divination
 sacrifice, 39, 52, 62, 67, 69, 70, 73, 101, 103, 107, see also fowl sacrifice
 Chin, 100, 112
 Chinese, divination, 106, 118-9
 sacrifice, 105-6, 113
 time-reckoning, 150-2, 157-8, 163-5
 Chit Lam Sang, 50
 Chuang, divination, 82, 117
 sacrifice, 82, 113
 Chung Chia, 82
 Chutya, 35-6, 93, 111
 cloth, 51, 66, 69, 74
 cobra, 44, 89
 cock sacrifice, 33-4, 39, 41, 54, 56, 61, 62, 95, 103, 114, see also fowl sacrifice
 coconut, 75
 coin, 41
 cow sacrifice, 39, 50-1, 61, 94
 crab, 76, 89
 dam phui, 60-1
 Damodariyas, 40
 deer sacrifice, 44, 50-1, 61, 69, 107, 114-5
 definition, Tai, 1
 Deodhai, 43, 44, 46
 Diot, 138, 139
 divination, see also divination, 11, 114-5, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000
 contracts, 96, 98, 119
 fire-thong, 98
 lamps, 29, 83, 108, 110
 lime-case, 96-7
 liver, 25, 29, 67, 78, 83, 90, 97, 118, 174
 oracle bone, 106, 118-9, 176-7
 rice grain, 103
 skull, 103
 tearing leaf, 99, 177
 wet stone, 77, 110, 118
 dog sacrifice, 35-6, 38, 51, 60, 68-9, 78, 82, 89-90, 97, 100, 101, 102, 104, 106, 107, 113-5, 172-3, 175
 Dai Matung Phu Ra, 50, 51, 82, 62, 85-6
 dove, 44
 duck, egg, 51
 sacrifice, 29, 31, 36, 41, 44, 51, 54, 62, 70, 73, 79, 89, 107, 112, 126
 earth worm, 44, 89
 egg, 74, 76, 79-80, 90, 96, 97, 101, 103, 106, 119, 120
 elephant, 39, 50, 61, 85-6
 epidemic, 35-6, 76, 100
 fasting, 52
 feathers, 62
 fish, 44, 89
 five-day week, 135, 142-5, 164, 174-5, 176
 flowers, 32, 35, 72, 74, 76, 171
 fowl sacrifice, 25, 29, 31, 34, 35, 46, 57, 61, 67-9, 71-2, 73, 74, 79, 82, 89, 97, 100, 101, 102, 107, 110, 112, 116
 frog, 44, 89
 fruit, 30, 32, 58, 60
 gamusa, 34
 Gao, 94
 ginger, 97-8
 glutinous rice, 2, 79, 81

- goat sacrifice, 35, 41, 44, 51-2, 54, 56-7, 79, 89, 95-7, 107, 108-9, 112
- gong, 66
- grains, 41
- gunpowder, 7
- hen sacrifice, 41, 57, 64, 79, 113, see also fowl
- hengdau*, 45, 56, 57
- Hinduism, 39-43, 47, 61, 64, 89, 94, 113
- Hmong, divination, 104-5, 118
- sacrifice, 103-4, 112-3, 175
- talaao*, 116
- time-reckoning, 152-3, 163
- holung*, 49-50, 61, 63, 86
- ho phi*, 74, 83
- Honsan, 26
- horse sacrifice, 50, 61, 94, 108, 113
- human sacrifice, 54-6, 65, 70, 71, 77, 89-9, 93-7, 105, 109, 111-2, 176
- incense, 30, 52, 72, 171
- Indian time-reckoning, 147-8, 155, 160-1
- Indra, 32, 53
- Japanese, 45
- Jani, 108-9, 113
- Kachin, divination, 99-100, 113
- sacrifice, 98-100, 112
- talaao*, 116
- kam* days, 28, 31, 88, 126
- Karen, sacrifice, 102, 113, 175
- talaao*, 116
- kesu Ahom, 41-2
- Kesakhuti, 55
- Kha, 116
- Khamti, sacrifice, 36-8, 83, 168
- time-reckoning, 128-9, 145-6, 168
- Khamyang, divination, 25, 29, 90
- sacrifice, 25-34, 83-8, 112-4, 168
- time-reckoning, 128-9, 145, 168
- Khao Kham, 50
- Khasi, 95-8, 111, 112, 118
- Khmer, see Cambodian
- Khm, 103, 116, 118, 149-50
- khut lak*, 49-50, 85-6
- Khun Haang and Khun Chhang, 26-9, 31
- Koch, 7, 60, 93, 111
- kui leng lak*, 62
- Lakka, 54
- ladder, ritual, 49
- Lahu, 102-3, 116, 118
- Lai Lung Kham, 50, 59-60
- lak*, 29, 49-50
- lak lau*, 75-6, 85
- lak mung*, 70, 71, 111-2, 171
- lak zua*, 85
- lak-ni*, 123-4, 127
- Lamot, 116, 150, 163
- lance, 66, 68
- Lang Ku Ri, 30, 53
- Lao, divination, 78-9, 90, 117-9
- sacrifice, 74-9, 89, 111-4
- talaao*, 115-6
- time-reckoning, 134-5, 139-46
- Lawa, 102, 112, 114, 116
- Lengdon, see Lueng Don
- lightning, 32
- liver, see divination
- lizard, 35
- Lue, divination, 67-8, 90, 118
- sacrifice, 66-8, 83, 86, 112-3
- talaao*, 67, 115-6
- time-reckoning, 130, 141
- Lueng Don, 30, 50, 53, 56-9, 87
- Lueng Din, 50
- Madhavadeva, 40
- madai* drum, 52, 64
- Mahapurusa, 40, 41
- male child, 32
- mask, 34, 73
- Mayamaria, 40
- me dam me phi*, 61-2
- mithun sacrifice, 99, 100
- Mo Jokh, 62
- Moamaria, 40, 52
- Mohan clan, 44, 46
- Mon time-reckoning, 148-9
- money, 51-54
- Mongolia, 2-3, 45
- monsoon, 84-5, 170
- Muong, sacrifice, 107-8, 112
- talaao*, 116
- time-reckoning, 153, 158-9, 164, 165
- Mut Kum Tai Kum, 50
- Nang Hua Tong, 27, 28, 30-1
- Naga, 26, 27, 97-8, 112
- nail, 104
- Nanchao, 5
- Nang Khai, 50
- Nang Rai, 50
- Nang Si Sao, 50
- Neua, sacrifice, 79, 112
- time-reckoning, 135-6, 142
- New Year, 83, 85, 103, 107, 126, 141, 169-70, 174
- nyek*, 54
- Ngucak, 80
- Nhang, 82
- nil xung*, 32-3, 38
- Nua sacrifice, 68-9, 113
- oath taking, 91
- oil lamp, 30, 52, 60, 62
- omens, see divination
- ox sacrifice, 39, 110
- Palaung, 116
- Pear, 110-1, 112, 175
- Pha Pin Bet, 53
- Phakey, sacrifice, 34-6, 83-4, 113, 168
- time-reckoning, 126-8, 131, 138-42, 145-6, 168-9
- Phi Fau, 31-33
- Phi Ka Thial, 50
- Phi Mao Thao, 50, 54-6, 89, 111
- Phi Mueang, 25-31, 36-7, 66-8, 73, 75, 80, 81, 83-8, 170, 173
- Phi Nua, 81
- Phi Sura Mueang, 34-5, 37, 113
- Phi Le Khau, 50
- pig sacrifice, 25, 29, 33, 35, 36, 37, 39, 51, 61, 69, 74, 75-6, 81, 83, 89, 97, 98, 102, 103, 107, 108, 110, 112, 173
- pigeon sacrifice, 36, 41, 44, 51, 57, 89
- pine needles, 102
- pipal, 39
- Pisak-si, 55, 93, 111
- Po Then Luang, 80, 87
- poka Ahom, 41-2
- pollution, ritual, 33, 36
- pregnancy, 32
- Proto Tai, 3, 168
- P'u Noi, divination, 102, 118
- sacrifice, 101-2, 113, 175
- talaao*, 116
- time-reckoning, 149-50, 157, 162-3

- pulses, 41
 Pau Khun Khiew, 26
 Pau Phi Sue, 39
- tal, 44, 73, 89
 red colour, 35, 38, 60, 79, 90, 105, 113-4
 Red Tai, divination, 82, 90-1, 118
 sacrifice, 81-2, 83-7
 talao, 115-6
 time-reckoning, 137-8, 140-1, 146
- rice, cakes, 52, 60
 dried, 51
 glutinous, 3, 73, 81
 salted, 52
 uncooked, 35, 67, 82
- rice-wine, 19, 22, 23, 30, 36, 41, 42, 52, 60, 66, 75-6, 97, 107, 115
- ritual impurity, 33, 36
- saun phra phuum*, 38
saang, see altar
 sabre, 67, 76, 77, 101, 109
 sacred days, 28, 31, 88, 126
 Sakta worship, 41, 43, 112
samkranti, 25
 sand pyramid, 31
sangkhen, 25, 28, 30, 31
 Sankaradeva, 40, 43
sao phi lung, 34
sao tung lum, 60, 64
 Siorordeka clan, 54
 Sedang, 116
 seven-day week, 123, 143, 164
 Shan, sacrifice, 63-6, 88, 111, 176
 talao, 67, 115
 time-reckoning, 129, 138-41
 Siamese, divination, 73, 90, 117-8
 sacrifice, 70-3, 83, 88, 111, 176
 talao, 115-6
 time-reckoning, 131-3, 138-46
- sinkara flower, 56
 Siva, 53
 sixty-day cycle, 125-36, 141-2, 149-54, 165, 174, 177-8
 sixty-year cycle, 123-36, 138-9, 147-54, 165, 174, 177-8
- snake, 35
 spirit possession, 29, 52-3, 72, 76-8, 81-2, 87, 110, 171-2
- Stung, 108, 113
 strangulation, 41, 42, 51, 94
 Sue Hung Mung, 6
 Sue Ka Phan, 6, 62
 Sue Pat Phan, 43
- sugar cane, 58, 82, 111
 Sukapha, see Sue Ka Phan
 Sukra, 53
 swan, 44, 89
 sword, 39-40, 45, 91, see also *longdao*
- Tai, general, 1-8, 13-91, 107-75
talao, 67, 75, 88, 115-6, 118, 176
 Taniya Sawan, 64
 Tassan, 45
 Tackhamat, see Tow Kham Ti
 tea, 80
 ten-day week, 126-8, 133, 134, 142-3, 150-2, 153, 162-3, 164
- thatch bundles, 35-6
 then worship, 95, 111
 Tho, sacrifice, 82
 time-reckoning, 138, 140
thuria tomul, 30
 Tibet, 148
 tobacco, 66
 tortoise, 41
 Tow Kham Ti, 6
 tree, 25, 28-9, 35, 39, 67, 80, 83-4, 96, 100, 102, 109, 170-1
- tug-of-war, 67, 76, 83-4, 98
tulsi plant, 56
tun rung, 39
 turban, 33-4
 twelve-day week, 152-3, 157
- um phra*, 48-54, 62, 63-4, 83-7, 112
- Vajras, 53
 Vietnamese, 108-9, 153-4, 158-9, 164
 Visnu, 53
- wah kam*, 28, 31
 water consecration, 51
 white colour, 33, 34-5, 39, 44, 51, 68, 70, 85, 90, 100, 107, 108, 113
 White Tai, sacrifice, 80, 83-7
 talao, 115-6
 time-reckoning, 136-7, 141
 women, and tug-of-war, 82
wong-mah-mah 28, 29, 80, 78, 81, 80-1, 104
- Yas Sang Phan, 30, 52, 57-8, 62
 yagurt, 96
 yak, 107
 Yaso, sacrifice, 68-70, 82, 113-2
 talao, 115-6
 time-reckoning, 136-7, 138-42